

## CM ARTICLES

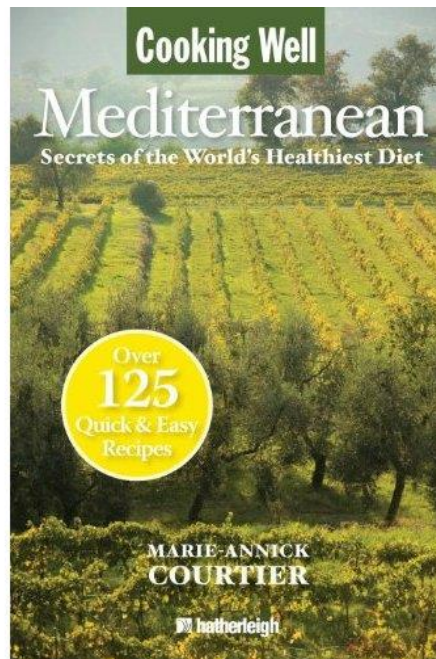
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## Healthy Approach to Weight Loss with Sensible Eating



To most Americans, weight loss is associated with extremes. In the last few years, I have seen many Americans eating small amount of tasteless unsatisfying foods, staying away from one food category, eating too much of another, substituting real food with shakes or food bars, or take a so call “miracle weight loss pill.” Cooking at home has lost its appeal and picking up convenience food has become the norm for many families. To top that, many people often engage in unhealthy eating habits by skipping meals, eating huge portions while going for the diet soda, or drinking a latte which often contains half of their entire daily caloric allowance, if not more. I also observed many people embarking in excessive exercise strategies that will eventually lead many of them to quit exercising altogether or to end up at the doctor’s office. Overall, it is not a pretty picture and, without a doubt in my mind, one of the reason for the health problems in this country. Here is a personal experience that convinced me of this.

When I came to the United States 20 years ago, I was not over-weight, in great health, and loved food. Embracing the American lifestyle, I started to see my weight fluctuating and digestive problems arising. Before I know it, I gained 20 pounds, did not feel well overall, had serious allergies, and suddenly found food un-appealing and boring. Eventually my allergies got worse and almost killed me. At that point, I became obsessed with finding a solution and researched everything possible regarding my situation. Doctors did not help; I was misdiagnosed many times, and I was left pretty much on my own to figure this out. Nothing seemed to give me the answer, until I recently made a trip back to my home country and particularly the South of France. Within a few days of being there, I suddenly realized I was feeling pretty good. As a matter of fact, I even stopped taking my daily allergy pill. It finally dawned on me that I had become too Americanized (if I may say so) and had lost my French



way of life and sensible eating. Determined to learn more about my sudden health improvement, I continued my research on healthy foods which lead me to the Mediterranean diet. Eventually I learned its advantages and the health benefits of seeds, particularly flaxseed. To make my story short, I have regained my health, lost 18 pounds (so far!) with very few sacrifices, and love food again. The United States is a country I love and California is my home now. But for my family's health sake, the Mediterranean way of life is what I embrace.

So what are such amazing life's secrets that everyone should consider to embrace? First, you must understand that the Mediterranean diet has been researched for years and studies have shown that people from countries such as France, Spain, Italy, and Greece live longer healthier lives. I visited all those countries many times and observe many interesting facts.

One intriguing fact is that most people there are a lot thinner than in the U. S. Even taking into consideration the latest sudden rise of obesity, particularly among the youth, they are still a lot thinner. Such rise over there is mainly due to the increase intake of convenience-processed foods and a more sedentary lifestyle, because of the computer age. Just like here, a major campaign has emerged to encourage parents to feed children fresh healthy wholesome foods. Returning to natural sources, traditional way of eating, and educating the public is already producing major results.

One thing that also intrigued me was how people there view weight control and weight loss. Weight loss is generally viewed as a slight variation of their everyday weight control or lifestyle. Small sacrifices (cutting down on pastries, red meat, charcuteries, and bread) and eating food in moderation pretty much resume their weight loss philosophy. Exercising is encouraged and often done through walks, bike rides, swims, tennis games, playing soccer, or having a game of "la pétanque" (bocce ball) with friends. It is rather considered a social activity. Walking is part of everyday life.

As in the U. S. right now, governments encourage people to eat a variety of food with moderation and based on the Mediterranean diet. The medical and scientific communities around the world have now many proofs substantiating special health benefits of such diet. Let's explore a little history about the Mediterranean diet.

More than half a century ago, the world health organization, composed of various doctors and scientists from around the world, started to study the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet. After World War II, Dr. Ancel Keys, a Minnesota University Physiologist joined with his wife and other researchers conducted extensive research in Europe. One of his major findings was the connection between saturated fat and heart disease. He was the first scientist who suggested that a diet containing plenty of fresh fish, vegetables, fruits, and olive oil may protect against heart disease. In the 1990, Dr. Walter Willett of Harvard University's School of Public Health made a major presentation on the Mediterranean diet and got finally world-wide recognition for its various health benefits.

However, it is only recently that scientists have been able to explain the real reasons behind the benefits of such diet. The discovery of our DNA interaction with fatty acids and new molecules, called nutraceuticals, are the main reason for such new amazing findings. As of today, numerous published studies have shown the protective effect of such diet particularly on heart disease, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, and even cancer. Specific foods have also shown to promote weight loss, brain health, and anti-inflammatory properties. Fresh natural and flavorful ingredients (organic preferably) such as fish rich in Omega-3, poultry, eggs, dairy products (low-fat preferably), beans, grains, vegetables, fresh herbs, spices, fruits, nuts, and olive oil are highly emphasized in the Mediterranean diet.

Now let's not forget about the French Paradox where moderate consumption of red wine is believed to be the reason for the lower rate of heart disease in that country despite a rich diet in certain regions of France. Clinical researches around the world are done right now on resveratrol, an enzyme found in seeds and skin of red grapes which is believed to be a major defense mechanism against many diseases associated with aging. For some, resveratrol is even thought as the possible fountain of youth!

Though balanced nutrition through fresh wholesome foods and wine play an important role in the health of the Mediterranean people; scientists also recognized that their lifestyle influence their overall health as well. How they view food and its role in their life is an important factor. People arrange their lives around their meals. Taking time to sit down for a meal is part of the culture and is believed to contribute to better digestion and health. A light breakfast may takes about 15 to 20 minutes and the average lunch or dinner meals takes about 30 minutes to an hour. It may be up to 2 hours over the week-end when entertaining family or friends. Often during lunch and dinner, conversation and laughter are rampant helping releasing stress which we know contributes to weight gain and health problems. Just those simple meals rituals are a major difference, where too often, a meal is grabbed on the run in the United States.

Every day, people will spend time in the kitchen using quick and easy recipes to feed their family, as they know how important it is to maintain such healthy habits. Children are often involved in the whole process, including setting up the table and learning table manners. Parents want to ensure that those traditions are passed to the next generation. Such education is considered as important as what they learn in school. The prepared meals are served to both children and adults. There is no different menu, instead just smaller portion for children. If anyone complains he or she does not like something, no substitute is offered. This is the way it is. Nutrition is more important than what you like and eventually children learn to appreciate a variety of food. Kids might argue at first or even refuse to eat something on their plate, but parents don't give in. The child may go to bed without eating much, but the truth of it is, parents know they will not go hungry for too long! In most cases, they eventually end up eating the food that they once rejected. Parents would tell you "A little discipline never hurt and forms character." Like anywhere else, everyone prefers certain foods over others, but nutrition has to be kept in balance. Through such process, kids learn to taste a variety of foods which contribute

to the development of their palate. It is also part of learning sensible eating and parents use such strategies daily. Feeding babies is the exception. We all know they cannot consume regular food until they reach a certain age. They will be introduced to a variety of foods through purées and eventually small pieces of real food. Educating children's taste buds is part of the early development stage. Feeding your baby is often done earlier than family meal time, mainly for being able to concentrate on properly feeding your baby. But it is also for the feeder to be able to relax and enjoy his or her own meal quietly.

Another major difference I observe is snacking between meals. Most doctors or nutritionist there will tell you to avoid snacking between meals, as it does contribute to weight gain. Generally only kids get a snack in the afternoon, as they need it for nourishment until dinner is served often later than 7:00 pm. Most adults will avoid snacking, but often consume a drink such as a small bottle of water, an espresso (not a huge cup with lots of cream or whipped cream) or a cup of tea. On special occasion, such as for a tea party, it is appropriate to indulge in small amount of food, but will be taken into consideration when dinner time comes. In the summer time, they may occasionally indulge in a small ice cream or gelato, generally a lot smaller scoop than in the U. S. There is also no late-night snack. Even diabetics break down their meals into smaller sizes to control their blood sugar. They don't snack; they follow a slightly different meal ritual.

Then come some of the biggest noticeable differences I observed between their culture and the America culture. First, when entertaining, meals rituals are maintained. No one has food lying around all day long, even when a buffet is set. No one watches a football game while snacking or eating a meal. You either pay attention to the game or to food. You cannot do both well at the same time nor is it good for your digestion. This might be why people often over-eat during such parties in the U. S., as they don't really pay attention nor realize how much food they are putting in their mouth while doing something else. This will bring us to the second difference: portion control and moderation. The portions served are about half the amount served in the U. S. Eating less is a major factor in good health and, following such concept alone, would probably reduce the obesity problems in the U. S. When it comes to eating, moderation has been exercised for generations and continues to be passed onto the next generation. Everyone knows that some foods are good for you and, those which are not so good, should not be abused. When needed, they will stay away from certain food or just have a small amount on occasion. Will-power is important and is taught from a very young age. It is nurtured by occasionally practicing avoiding certain foods. Then the reward is to be able to enjoy such foods on occasion and without guilt. Consequently, no food is banned from their diet. Interesting enough, most people won't tell you they are on a diet. They will rather tell you "I am watching what I eat." The focus is not on good or bad food, but moderation. Everyone understands that, from time to time, small sacrifices are necessary for your health's sake. Finally, shopping and cooking with fresh ingredients is done daily. It is viewed as an opportunity to take a nice walk and socialize with the locals no matter what the weather may be. Shopping, cooking, and eating are viewed as a pleasure of the senses. "Aromas induce the appetite and exult the senses" they

would tell you. While talking and selecting various fruits and vegetables at a Saint-Tropez outdoor market, the merchant told me this sentence that I never forgot: “Feed your heart and soul with these nature’s beauties, your body will thank you by rewarding you with good health!” Indeed, it is easy to feed your soul by selecting food that makes you feel good, but doing so for your heart sake is another. Such philosophy has changed the way I looked at food forever. I highly recommend you think about it for a moment. Maybe next time you shop for food, you will think if it will benefit your “heart and soul” before you pay for it. And don’t forget that no one can feed their heart and soul by depravation. So do, once in a while, give yourself a break!

**To end this article**, I will briefly highlight the basic principles of my “Healthy Approach to Weight Loss through Sensible Eating”:

Commit to live for your health

Give up extremes

Treasure nature and those who cultivate the most natural foods

Educate your senses and be adventurous with foods

Establish meal rituals

Learn moderation by working on your will-power

Learn to understand and control your emotions

Pay attention to your surroundings, as they may distract you from your new healthy eating habits

Share your new sensible eating passion with others

Learn to cook sensible meals with healthy cooking techniques (check my PFC program)

To learn more about Chef Marie healthy lifestyle, check my programs and store. Remember

Stop Chasing the Pot of Gold

and

Start Chasing Chef Marie Fountain of Youth!

## Is Your Health Your Life?



I don't know you, but to me, my health is my life. My health is directly affected by what I eat, my environment, and my lifestyle. Without my health, everything else has very little meaning or use to me. You would think that most people acknowledge that, but apparently not.

As food and lifestyle are my specialties, I will leave the environment to experts. However, as a chef, I can certainly contribute to a better environment by re-cycling or using vegetables and fruits peel as fertilizers for my organic garden. I also can use citrus peels as deodorizer for my place. Just heat the oven on the lowest setting and place the peels on a baking sheet in the oven. After an hour, leave the door slightly open and continue to heat for another hour. Turn off the heat and leave the peels in the oven, still slightly open. Now you have wonderful citrus aromas all through your place for hours.

Now back to food and lifestyle. I actually would like to talk about food today. It is part of lifestyle anyway.

Everyone knows the saying: You are what you eat!

So if you are over-weight and your health is not good, one of the first places you need to look is what you eat. Why? Because I assume your environment does not make you sick. I don't believe that your environment is what make you over-weight, as you are in charge and can ultimately make the right choices. I also believe that your lifestyle can make you over-weight and sick, primarily due to poor eating habits. Ok, exercise and stress play a role, but not as important as what you feed your body. It is a simple concept that is unfortunately overlooked by many. People keep eating too much of the wrong foods and not enough of the foods that will give them back their health. People will take a pill that makes them quickly feel better. They also believe it will take care of their health problems or make up for their bad eating habits. They are forgetting a few major points. No pills can make up for the damages they are doing to their body with unhealthy foods. They are not treating the root of the problem and, giving up to such easy solution may actually have worse consequences on their health. The good news is that the body can heal itself in many cases by simply giving the nutrients it needs.

By changing eating habits, many health problems can actually disappear fairly quickly. Of course you need patience, will-power, and discipline; but the rewards are worth a little sacrifice, don't you think? If you give your body the nutrients it needs to function well, it will generally reward you by making you feel a lot better first. It may even help you recovering from a number of chronic diseases you suffer from. I personally experienced this and, I

can assure you, I will never go back to my bad eating habits. Eating healthy will also be a lot cheaper on your wallet, as you won't have so many medical bills or expenses. You won't have to take many medications either which can also have a negative effect on your body. Don't you think that just those facts are worth investing in your health by eating healthy?

Let me give you a basic starting point. Feed your body organic foods (or as natural as possible from your local farmers) and consider portion control. Portion are too big in the U. S., moderation is key to health too. Stay away from processed food as much as possible. Cook at home using healthy cooking techniques, and give priority to healthy meals in your life. Do sit down when you eat and take your time. It is ok to eat out on occasion, but choose restaurants that offer reasonable portions and healthy choices. If you want to learn more about healthy eating, I highly recommend you order, [Cooking Well: Mediterranean](#) or any of my books or programs. Please refer to Chef Marie's store. You can also come to learn some of my most precious secrets at one of my seminar such as at the "[Healthy Chef](#)" Seminar.

Finally, I will say this. If you were to eliminate everything you do in your life and just focus on feeding your body well, you would be amazed how quickly you would feel better. But you don't have to do that, just give a priority to healthy eating habits and you will see the difference in your health. And guess who will be proud of his/her accomplishments at the end, YOU! It will empower yourself not only physically but mentally. You are the only one who can make this happen; no one else can do it for you. Take charge now, your body will thank you later. Start to give your body the nutrients it needs and make

Your Health Your Life!

## What Can You Do to Lower Your Cholesterol?



First, you need to realize it is not just about food. It is about healthy lifestyle choices including exercising. The combination is what will get you results. Regarding foods, indeed eating certain foods can lower your bad cholesterol and increase your good cholesterol.

A low-fat diet and eating a reasonable amount are also necessary. Eating less red meat and more fish, a great source of Omega-3, will help (cod, salmon, tuna, herring, and anchovy). White meat is fine, if you don't eat the poultry skin and avoid cooking with it too often. Decreasing your animal protein source and replacing it by plant source is also advisable.

Using healthy cooking techniques (steaming, baking, par-boiling, broiling, grilling, or stir-frying with very little fat) is a must. Eating lots of colorful vegetables, dark greens, and a variety of fruits will also be beneficial. Finally, eating reasonable amount of almond, apple, avocado, barley, beans, carrot, cod liver oil, flaxseed oil, flaxseed, garlic, grapefruit, shiitake, oats, olive oil, soybean, and walnut are known to have positive effect on lowering cholesterol.

Remember healthy lifestyle is also about moderation. So, pay attention to what you eat and avoid extremes.

## A Little Philosophy



I once received this amazing advice from a Chinese ping pong coach "Don't try so hard. If you put too much pressure on a stick it will break."

A few years later, I realized how precious was his advice not just for ping pong, but also for my life.

Think how simpler your relationships and for that matter your life would be, if you stop fighting and walk the road that is easier to follow. Yes, some relationships are not worth pursuing and better for you to let go. Make room for relationships that will make your life wonderful....

And yes, it can be applied to healthy eating for your health sake!



## The Conquer of Your Will



Just like a river, how strong is your will to make it through!

A new year has arrived, and America's weight problems are, once again, making the headline news. We even heard about Oprah's weight gain and her plans to get back in shape. Then we heard this sentence that really got my blood boiling "If Oprah can't do it with a personal trainer and a personal chef, how can I?"

Since when should anyone give up her/his goals just because Oprah is unsuccessful on hers? At least not yet, as I believe she can keep a healthy weight for the rest of her life with the right coaching. But let's get back to the topic here.

Since when is a personal trainer, a personal chef, or anyone else for that matter, responsible for what anyone does with their own health? Why do people have the need to see a celebrity succeed to feel empowered? We all love heroes, but come on! Who has the power in the first place? Who is in charge? Can't anyone think for themselves anymore?

It is certainly advisable to look for support, education, and specific tools to achieve lifestyle goals, but ultimately all of that is less important than your will to achieve. If you have no will to achieve, why would you look for such information in the first place? Yes, I said it again, it is about will. Too many people unpowered their will with reasons and excuses. Everyone has a will. But what most people don't know is how to train it, stimulate it and eventually put it on cruise control. A will has to be challenged and self-discipline can feed it in a way many don't recognize. To me, will and self-discipline cannot exist without the other. They are ultimately some of the most important contributors to success and being able to live the life one wants. That said, to avoid overload, yes it happens, you need to send your will and self-discipline on a vacation once in a while!

Today, I have given up one of my most precious secret. And yes, it is one that I apply to weight control as well. Some of you might be able to figure out and apply such philosophy on your own, but for most, guidance will be needed to take control of your will.

Do feel free to contact me for personal coaching when you are ready to embark onto an amazing adventure: The Conquer of Your Will.

## Fitness and Lifestyle



My article published in the HEALTH AND FITNESS EXCELLENCE MAGAZINE March 2007  
Learn from The Healthiest People Alive! F I T N E S S • L I F E S T Y L E by Marie-Annick Courtier

Today, much information is available on health and fitness. We all have been told to eat less-fatty meats, lots of fruits and vegetables, drink plenty of water, avoid sodas, stay away from fast food, and to exercise. Still many people are struggling with weight and major health issues. Visibly, people are not following those suggestions or important factors are missing. I believe one of these factors is making the connection between healthy eating habits and lifestyle choices.

Today, our fast lifestyle does not allow for preparing and enjoying healthy homemade meals, and certainly not sitting down for at least half an hour to enjoy each meal. Americans have the need to be productive and not stay idle for a long period of time; spending time cooking and sitting down for a meal appears to be their least concern. They also do not seem to care about what they put into their bodies. The fast food industry thrives in the US mainly because of those reasons. However, if one is not in good health, how productive and active can one possibly be, and how long can a country of such individuals continue to thrive under those circumstances?

The question everyone should ask himself or herself is: Should we really make time for our health's sake? No one is forcing us to eat food bars, shakes, fast food, and packaged food while on the way to a game, our next appointment, or while watching our favorite television show. Should we eat while going somewhere or doing another activity? As long as we give priority to lifestyle over healthy eating habits, we will not get healthy or fit.

Also, by eating those types of foods, which have not much flavors in the first place, we have numbed our taste buds and denied ourselves of sensual pleasures. We also denied ourselves the pleasure of socializing around foods. If eating is something we are looking forward to, would not that become more of a priority in our schedule?

That is exactly what the healthiest people in the world do not do. In Saint-Tropez, people live for food. Their schedule is based around their meals, not the other way around. Every day, they find time to shop for the freshest and best ingredients available. They talk about food and share their secrets.

They tell you about the latest amazing meals they had, the fantastic chef book they just bought, the newest recipe they just tried out, the place to find the best product, and the wine maker that has the best price to quality ratio. Sure, their diet, which mostly consists of fresh fish, lots of fruits and vegetables, olive oil, whole grains, nuts, wine, and dark chocolate, is one major reason why they are the healthiest in the world, but it is also because of the role of food in their lives.

#### Use Flavorful Ingredients

Cooking and eating flavorful ingredients are very important to them. They consider those elements a major part of life's adventures and sensual experiences. It is often done with family and friends, simply because they love to socialize around food. Though they no longer spend hours in the kitchen like the previous generations, they still care about the kind of food they prepare. They prepare easier quicker recipes and continue to get the children involved in the process while emphasizing the importance of the meal rituals.

They will welcome you into their homes à la franquette, which means, simple delicious foods, often paired with wonderful wines, and a colorfully decorated table. More than likely, they will invite you to share one of their found treasures, some kind of food or wine.

Like these people, many chefs in the restaurants of Saint-Tropez will shop daily and base their meals on the freshest and highest quality ingredients available. No-one expects less nor will settle for less, either. That is one major reason why eating is such a pleasurable experience in Saint-Tropez. They are also well aware of what is healthy for them, but do not dwell on it.

Obviously, staying healthy is not only about food, but also about exercise. The Saint-Tropez people let food dictate some aspect of what we would call a fitness plan. They walk to get to the outdoor market. They walk to different stores to find specific ingredients. They walk after a nice meal. They might play tennis or soccer, take a swim, but certainly do not go to the gym or do strenuous exercises. The young and the not-so-young play la pétanque (also known as game

of boules or bocce in Italian) on a regular basis. Exercising is thought as a social fun activity rather than as a health issue. Sure, everyone is concerned with health, but what really matters to them is enjoying a good time with great food and great friends.

These are only a few secrets of the healthiest place in the world. I invite you to read The Saint-Tropez Diet to discover what the people of Saint-Tropez have been nurturing for generations and how their passions for life and food have made their lifestyle the envy of the world.

Over the past few months, numerous published studies have reported the benefits of Mediterranean-type diets in reducing the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and Alzheimer's disease. But the secret ingredient in the Mediterranean diet has always been much more than just the combination of nutrients and whole foods, as any visitor to Saint-Tropez, the French Riviera's crown jewel, will tell you. The art and beauty of food, as well as sensual pleasures, are also the key to the diet's success.

I, Chef Marie, share my culinary tips and easy-to-prepare recipes that deliver on the pleasures of eating, while co-author Dr. Apostolos Pappas explains the key principles of the Saint-Tropez Diet—high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins and anti-oxidants from wholesome fresh ingredients.

**ACTION:** Change your lifestyle. Health and Fitness Excellence Magazine.

## My 6 Secrets to Better Nutrition and Health



All the latest scientific data acknowledge the importance of good nutrition to lengthen life.

Are you wondering how to supercharge your body with foods that are good for you and that provide immediate healthful benefits?

Are you wondering how to prepare those foods the healthiest way and in the shortest time possible? Well, I can give you those answers!

Here are some of my secrets for a healthy nutrition plan:

### SELECT AND EAT HEALTHY FOODS

Eat at least 2 to 4 servings of wild fish a week. Choose fish such as salmon, tuna, trout, mackerel, sablefish, swordfish, cod, hake, sardine, herring, anchovy, sea bass, sea bream, perch, red snapper, etc...

Those types of wild fish contain high level of Omega-3 fatty acids which are known to lower bad cholesterol (LDL), reduce inflammation, slow the formation of blood clots, prevent high blood pressure and irregular heartbeat, and reduce plaque formation in arteries.

Eat at least 2 to 4 servings of organic or free-range poultry or other lean white meats a week.

Eat 1 serving of grass-fed organic meats such as beef or lamb once in a while, preferably not every week. Those types of organic meats have a healthier diet than non-organic and, consequently, contain higher amount of beneficial fat for our body such as Omega-3.

Purchase organic eggs or free-range that contains Omega-3. Eat them no more than twice a week.

Eat at least 3 to 6 servings of organic protein plants source such as beans (black, yellow, and red) every week. They are high in fibers and polyphenols which have good anti-inflammatory and anti-allergenic properties.

Combine those meals with organic source of vitamin A: carrot, squash, beet, sweet potato, spinach, red/yellow bell pepper, pumpkin, tomato, cantaloupe, mango, and apricot. . Eat 5 servings or more each day (including other vegetables and fruits mentioned below). Yellow/red vegetables contain carotenoids (beta-carotene) which help protect against cancer and the effects of aging.

Enjoy other organic colored vegetables and fruits every day. They are powerful antioxidants. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, turnips, cauliflower and particularly dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, mustard greens, and collard greens. Fruits: berries, orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, tangerine, and kumquats.

Cook with organic garlic, onion, scallion, and leek as often as possible. They have cancer-fighting properties, lower your bad cholesterol (LDL), and reduce blood clots.

Flavor your foods with wonderful fresh organic herbs particularly basil, oregano, and parsley. Use spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, turmeric, curry, etc. They are rich in antioxidant and boost the immune system.

Eat organic whole grains such as quinoa, millet, barley, spelt, couscous, brown rice, rye, buckwheat and oats. Eliminate refined grains as much as possible. I am talking of those made with white flour, white rice, pasta (except whole wheat pasta) and baked goods. They contain antioxidants, lignans, and minerals which fight cancer and reduce oxidation of the body.

Eat 2 Tbsp. of organic walnut, almond, hazelnut, pistachio, flaxseeds or chia seeds every day. Because of their high polyphenols and vitamins; they are known to reduce the risk of cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Include 2 serving of organic plain dairy products a day: cottage cheese, regular or low-fat Greek yogurt, regular or low-fat milk, goat milk, soy milk, rice milk or almond milk. They contain all the vitamins our body needs every day and lot less sugar than flavored varieties. Limit fatty cheese and cream which contain too much fat.

Eat 1 to 2 ounces of all-natural dark chocolate (75% and above cocoa content). This type of chocolate is known to contain high level of flavonoids which are known to fight allergies, inflammation, lower blood pressure, and protect the body against oxidation by stimulating the immune system.

Drink 1 glass of wine (4 ounces), particularly red wine, 3 to 5 times a week. Except for those who suffers from alcohol related issues. Red wine and is known to increase good cholesterol (HDL), relax the arteries, and prevent blood clots. For non-drinkers, replace with organic grape

juice or eat organic grapes. Flavonoids and polyphenols are found in grapes and are known to fight allergies, inflammation, and protect the body against oxidation inside the body by stimulating the immune system.

Drink plenty of water every day, including organic black tea, white or green tea. Those types of tea contain flavonoids which fight allergies, inflammation, lower blood pressure, and protect the body against oxidation by stimulating the immune system. (Blueberries, broccoli, tea, chocolate, and onion family too). Herbal teas offer a great healthy alternative to just drinking plain water. Sparkling water can be a change and great substitution for soda. Adding fresh squeezed lemon, lime, orange juice, or grape juice will vary the pleasures in either plain or sparkling water!

**ELIMINATE UNHEALTHY FOODS** - Convenience foods, most fast foods, packaged foods, vending machines foods, charcuterie, and baked goods made with white flour, sugar, and unhealthy fats. Also eliminate foods containing chemicals, additives, preservatives, and colorants. Eliminate soda and juices with added sugar.

**EAT THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF FOOD** -Most of us have a natural desire to eat more than we really need. Knowing that, all we must do is eat less and watch out for the food that our body does not really need. Everyone is different, has different lifestyle, and health issues. Therefore, no formula fits everyone. There is only one's individual formula.

In general, most people need about 1500-1600 calories per day. Those calories may vary, if you need to lose weight, or if you exercise a lot and burning lots of calories. You can eat those calories within 3 to 4 meals a day or even more if you feel the need (especially for diabetics to maintain their sugar level constant). Again, those are guidelines and it is best to contact your doctor, registered dietitian, or nutritionist for all the necessary data to determine what is best for you.

**EAT FOOD THAT AGREES WITH YOU** - For your body to function well, you need to eat foods that agree with you. Substitute the offending foods with those which have similar nutrients and therefore health benefits.

**USE HEALTHY COOKING TECHNIQUES** - Best is to steam, par-boil, bake, broil, barbecue, stir-fry or sauté with a little healthy fat. No frying since it destroys healthy oils particularly in fish and adds to much fat to foods.

Use healthy fats such as olive oil, canola oil, grapeseed oil, flaxseed oil, walnut oil and avocado oil.

Cook as little as possible vegetables to retain vitamins and minerals.

Learn my unique healthy cooking techniques through the program – The Personal Fitness Chef Program, one of my seminar, or live event.



**EXERCISE FOR YOUR HEALTH AND GET SOME SLEEP** - 45 minutes per day of regular exercise. Preferably alternate the types of exercises to avoid boredom.

Do some weight lifting three times a week.

Do some stretching every day.

Use relaxation techniques to exercise and relax the mind and body.

Adequate sleep (about 8 hours) is what our body needs to recover from our everyday labor.

Want to know more about healthy meals and my healthy lifestyle? Check out my programs...

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## A Healthier Turkey Leg



Turkey often goes on sales after Thanksgiving and can be a great bargain.

Roast and freeze the meat for later use. Once cooked, you can also use the meat in a few recipes and freeze prepared meals for later use.

Turkey leg can also be a bargain. However, because of higher fat, I recommend the following technique to make it healthier.

1. Barbecue or grill brushing as little fat and later with a barbecue sauce. The barbecue sauce will give that beautiful color that you see on this picture!
2. Another possibility, remove the skin. Place the leg in a pan and cover with stock or broth. Bring to a boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Skim any fat that comes to the surface. Add chopped vegetables (onions, carrots, celery, and garlic), sage, and a bouquet garni. Add more stock to cover and continue to simmer for 40 minutes or until the meat is tender. Keep removing fat from the surface.

Once cooked through, remove the leg, chopped the meat, and return it to the pan. Add chopped spinach and bring to a simmer. Season the soup and serve immediately.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

## Spices and How to Prepare Your Own Pumpkin Pie Spices Blend



As we learned before, purchasing the best quality product is very important. You need to look for good quality “whole spices” that offer pure slightly strong aromas and natural beautiful colors. If you are not an expert, don’t worry; start by selecting products from various sources and keep experimenting. Eventually, you will familiarize yourself with spices and aromas based on the different world regions they may come from.

You need to look at whole spices in many ways. First, look at the colors. Is it shiny and shows a little shade area? If so, that is good. Too much may be a bad sign. Second, does it release a fragrance that is subtle and inviting? Does it make you feel like you discovered something special? If you do, that is a good thing. Third, take a bite into it. Does it make your mouth watering, or do you have a bad taste in your mouth?

Does it leave you a nice smooth taste or a bad taste deep in your throat? The last two ones of the last two sentences are not good. This pleasurable and even romantic experience is very similar in a way to wine tasting.

There are different ways to grind whole spices. I personally recommend using a mini-grinder. It is fast, and you can grind to different textures. Do smash a little bit the spices to make it easier on your grinder and avoid breaking the blade. For best results, grind a little more than what you will need for a specific recipe.

Grind one spice at a time and store separately from other spices. You will mix them together later on. There is one important point before you get moving. You need to start to grind with the mildest and finish with the strongest. I will explain why later; keep reading.

When I visited perfume manufacturers in Provence, I learned that it is extremely important to familiarize yourself with your products before doing anything. You need to touch, smell, and taste to get a good feel of a product. First, start with the mild spice and finish by the strongest. If you reverse the process, your senses will be overpowered, and you won't be able to scent the mild aromas. A "parfumeur" has many ways to make a scent, but they always must figure out the mild fragrances/aromas, the middle fragrances/aromas, and the strong fragrances/aromas. They also pay attention to the oil they contain, as it will affect the final product. That is also true with spices and herbs. So how do you determine if they are mild, medium, or strong fragrances/aromas?

In the case of a whole spice, you need to decide how you are going to grind it. Should you grind it to a powder, a slightly grainy texture, or a grainy texture? In a way, it is a little bit like coffee. The texture will affect the end result. If you grind like a powder, it will melt differently than if you have a coffee grind texture. You will have to determine the texture based on the final use. For liquid with short cooking or no cooking, it is best to use powder, as it will mix better and much faster. If you want to use the spices for a stew, long cooking, don't grind so fine as it would disappear quickly, and the flavors will have evaporated through the cooking process. That is also why sometimes, for long cooking, you may use whole instead of grind. The whole spice slowly releases its aromas and flavors. What evaporated does not really matter, as the whole spice keeps releasing its aromas and flavors.

How do you determine which one to start with? I like to put spices in the following five flavor categories which make it easier to taste in the right order. This order is based on flavors, aromas, and strength. Do refer to it when needed and when you are going to become the next spice chemist!

Unifying Category: Coriander seed, fennel seed, paprika, poppy seed, sesame seed, turmeric or fennel seed.

Sweet Category: Allspice, anise, Cassia, cinnamon, nutmeg or vanilla.

Pungent Category: Caraway, celery or fenugreek seed, cardamom, cloves, cumin, ginger, juniper, lemon myrtle, saffron, licorice, mace or star anise.

Tangy Category: Caper, sumac, tamarind, hot spices, pomegranate or zest.

Hot Category: Chili, horseradish, mustard, peppers or wasabi.

Now we are ready to become the chemist and prepare our pumpkin pie spice blend. There are many different recipes out there and will give you my favorite. You will need to purchase the following whole spices for Chef Marie's healthy recipe: cinnamon, ginger, clove, nutmeg,

cardamom, and allspice. Grind to a fine powder each spice separately and set aside. Do go through the learning process explained above to get familiarized with each aromas and flavors.

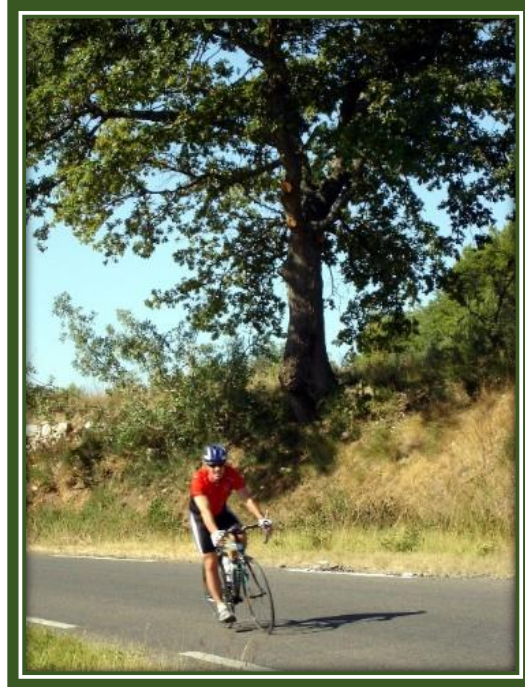
**In a bowl mix:**

4 tablespoons ground cinnamon  
2 tablespoons ground ginger  
2 teaspoons ground clove  
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom  
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice

Now you are ready to use in your recipe or use in the Spiced Maple Dressing recipe above.

Use this blend in pumpkin pies, sweet potato pies, cakes, cookies, custards, syrups, pancakes, fruit salads, and ice creams. It is great with sweet potatoes, breads, regular teas, herbal teas, cold drinks, apple ciders, etc.

## Athletes' Nutrition



The Summer Olympics are one of my favorite events to watch. Some of my readers know that I love sports and used to compete at the International level. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to compete at the Olympics, as Table Tennis was not an Olympic Sports in my younger days. I definitely will not miss watching that competition, as it is still close to my heart....

I must make some comments regarding athletes' nutrition, as too many people think; they must have a real healthy diet to be fit like they are. Well the truth is that most athletes don't have a healthy diet. Here is a good example with a phenomenal athlete such as Michael Phelps. His breakfast apparently includes two eggs-and-cheese sandwiches, a bowl of grits, a large omelet, and a tall stack of chocolate chip pancakes. This menu is not unusual for some athletes and considering the amount of exercise they do in a day, you may say, very understandable. But is it?

"Why worry about it?" you may also say. He exercises enough and will easily burn those calories throughout his daily exercise sessions. Most athletes also think that way. They don't really think about what they eat; all they worry is having enough energy and consequently meeting their appetite and physical needs. The real problem is that it sets them up to serious health problems later in life or even sooner. When those athletes' workout, their body produces a higher amount of "free radicals." As we learned in the Saint-Tropez Diet, those radicals can be very harmful to the body and need to be neutralized with a wide range of

antioxidants and nutraceuticals. And where do you find those antioxidants and nutraceuticals; in a lot of vegetables and fruits. Didn't see much of that in Michael Phelps breakfast, did we?

Once those athletes retire or reduce their training even by just half, they start to put on weight and often don't understand why. The answer is easy, their body is no longer burning all the calories they used to burn, and they did not change their eating habits to match their new lifestyle. They also had very bad eating habits in the first place. Consequently, some of them find themselves with serious health problems such as high cholesterol, heart disease, or diabetes Type II, which they did not necessarily have during their athletic years. Many top athletes also struggle to maintain a healthy weight once they no longer compete.

Yes, I do work with top athletes who have retired and need to change their diet drastically. I often face amazing athletes and individuals who had lots of discipline to become the best, but have little discipline when it comes to eating habits. I approach such problem the same way I coach an athlete. You need to be aware of your habits, your needs, your possibilities, and your options. Next, you need to put a plan together with attainable goals. You don't build a Champion overnight, so don't expect to change your eating habits overnight either. Once you meet your first goal, move on to the next one, and so on. Before you know it, you have a chance to a medal!

Another important point I bring out is the importance of a good foundation. I don't think Michael Phelps would have become the best in the world, if he did not have good basic techniques built into him. It is the same in a good healthy eating plan. You need to build first a good foundation that becomes a natural reflex and then build on it. Once you become more comfortable with specific healthy food ingredients, you will be able to be more adventurous and build your very own new flavorful recipes. You will be able to make better choices when eating out as well. At the end, your new healthy eating habits will become a piece of cake!

Want to start to build such good foundation, check out my programs...

Et Vive the Olympic Games!

## Facts and Myths About the French



How do French people eat all these rich foods and stay skinny? What are their secrets? I heard “French Woman don’t get fat”, is this true? How many times have I heard these questions! Before I try to answer, I like to point out that there are many misconceptions and false information circulating about the French, their culture, and their diet. I also must point out that the “French diet” is really about the French Culture. French people do not follow a diet, but rather a way to live their lives with certain rituals and rules passed from generation to generation. One of these important rituals is pleasing your taste buds with tasty foods while giving the body what it needs to function well. Later on, we will explore all this in detail.

“French Woman don’t get fat”. Not true. It is a great title, but not the reality! One known fact is that people living in certain regions of France are not as healthy as in other regions. By far, the Mediterranean region is the healthiest.

In the last three years, the French have seen a rise in weight problems especially among children, mainly due to the increase of convenience-processed foods, junk foods at schools, sodas, fast foods places, and a more sedentary lifestyle because of computer age. However, their response to this problem was quite different from the response in the United States. As soon the French government reports came out regarding the nation getting fatter, they altogether took measures. They started by removing junk food from schools. We are not just talking sodas and candies; we are talking about food in general. Healthy foods reappeared in the school cafeterias with an emphasis on vegetables and fruits. The lawmakers lay down new



rules on public (television and prints) information regarding food advertising. Chefs rallied and took on themselves to create programs to educate children and parents on healthy tasty foods. Regions promoted local produces and specialties through school classrooms, fairs, outdoor markets, pamphlets, books, and various educational programs. Even parents made it a priority to watch out for healthier food, stay away from “fast food” when eating out, and promote outings for exercise. The result, the latest reports are showing that the nation is starting to see a decrease of health and weight problems, especially in children. Now, let us talk about a few misconceptions.

First, contrary to belief, French cuisine is not full of fat. True twenty years ago, many people were using lots of butter to cook and making sauces. Today, thanks to the creativity of chefs, light sauces are on dinner tables. Sure, butter is still used, but more appropriately for specific applications, such as pastry. Generally, olive oil and canola oil have replaced butter in cooking. Many sauces are made from oil, stock, vegetables, and herbs making room for a lighter and more flavorful cuisine rather than a heavy rich cuisine.

Second, they do not eat a lot of fatty food. Most of their meals are based on a small amount of meat/seafood/eggs, plenty of vegetables-legumes, fruits, and milk products. Sure, they still eat charcuterie (pâtés, various cooked or dry ham, saucissons, or sausages) but a lot less than in the past. They also watch out for cheese, though still enjoy a small amount once a day. They do love their pastries; which chefs have managed to get lighter without compromising taste. However, they mostly purchase them when entertaining. Most of their pastries are less sweet than in the United States. By the way, you can reduce the amount of sugar by almost 25% in many American recipes, without causing major problems. Yes, they do enjoy their chocolates. It is regularly consumed but in a very small amount. Pure dark chocolate is the most often purchased by connoisseurs. Overall, they definitively eat less fatty food today and are more aware of fats in their foods than they were years ago. Everyone knows that you are supposed to reduce how much and how often you eat rich foods and that is what they do. However, no one focuses on the subject, nor talks about it every day, nor obsess over weight. Sure, you will often hear someone turning down bread or dessert at a restaurant, but no one will say, “Are you on a diet?”

Third, they do not eat big breakfast. A croissant or a piece of bread with a little butter or marmalade dipped into a café au lait, coffee, tea, or chocolate milk represent what most French people have for breakfast. Hotels and cafés offer more breakfast choices due to the demand of foreigners, not of the French people.

Fourth, they do snack and that is the truth! After school, parents often stop by the bakery to buy their kids a pastry (a pain au chocolat, a sablé “butter cookie type”, or a brioche) or an ice cream in the spring. Otherwise, the kids enjoy a couple of cookies from commercial packages, a fruit, or a piece of bread with chocolate or marmalade. Do you really believe that any of those parents will not join into this afternoon delight, at least occasionally! Do you seriously think that all those crêpes stands, newspapers kiosks, fair style caravans that sell an array of goodies

would still be in business if no one snacked! What about all those little food stores that suddenly appeared in the subway of Paris, shopping malls, or train stations.

Then, there are the young vendors making their way through the crowded beaches; or the small kiosk, at the zoo, selling those delicious thin little waffles that you are supposed to feed the animals in the first place! One of my old favorite is the chestnuts vendors who keep you warm in the winter. French people do snack, however, only occasionally and mostly late in the afternoon. Sometimes, the body needs replenishment and you should not feel guilty about it. Now, if you really do not need it, then it is “une gourmandise”, a sweet treat. That should be a rare occasion and be very special. Finally, they do not skip meals nor substitute a meal with a food bar or a protein shake, which is inconceivable to a French person.

Fifth, they eat a lot. That is not true. Sure, they might have two or three courses for dinner, but each course is very small. Comparing the American restaurant serving size with theirs, or many places in the world, it is about half the American amount. The snacks and bakery items are also much smaller. Did I mention that the French servings have not really changed since I was a child growing up in France? As matter of fact, a few years back, I can recall the bakery items getting a little smaller, so the price would not go up. There is no “super-size me” in France. One other major difference I noticed is the portion size when you shop. You will buy a piece of meat or fish weighing about 4 to 5 ounces versus 8 to 10 ounces in the States. Think about it a minute, that is 50% more. Maybe the consumer should require smaller portion from the food industry!

Ok, I am going to say it, even if this is going to make people mad at me. I am seriously wondering about this. Do Americans really want to eat healthy? If so, they sure don't show it when eating out, which they do a lot. All the fast food industry and restaurants offering huge portions are doing well. Meanwhile the restaurants offering smaller portions and healthier choices are barely surviving. Many chefs told me that they tried to offer smaller portions, but the consumer did not want it. The consumer dictates their outcomes, so guess what they do! I am asking you to think about this. What do you really want? Do you want to continue this way, knowing the consequences? On the other hand, do you want to see changes for the better?

Sixth, they do eat white flour and white rice. Many French breads are made with white flour and other grains. Pastries, crêpes, soups, and sauces contain white flour. White rice and other types of rice are eaten occasionally. They know that wholegrain is better for you, but they will tell you “Products made with a hundred percent wholegrain do not taste as good”. Choosing just wholegrain to the detriment of taste is too much asking. By the way, once in a while, they do eat a sandwich for lunch (just check the bakery around lunch), but they are not humongous nor piled with tons of meat.

Seventh, they do not spend hours in the kitchen to make dinner. Like in the U.S., the family cell has changed over the years, and many women work full time. On everyday basis, they no longer spend hours in the kitchen like their grandmothers or mothers did. However, they still care, as the previous generation did, about the food they put on their dinner table. They still shop for

fresh ingredients and cook using easier quicker recipes. They still get the children involved in the process and still emphasize the importance of the meal rituals.

Everyone knows that French life revolves around foods. Their life is schedule around their meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). That is part of the French Culture. Even their working habits allow a one-hour lunch. Many companies offer restaurant-tickets as part of their benefits. During the week, they eat lunch within an hour allowing time for relaxation, for catching up with friends, walking while window-shopping, and for business lunches. It is not all about work, they do slow down to enjoy food and life. People do a lot of shopping on Saturday or are involved in sports, and therefore, might have similar ritual for lunch as these working days. Sunday is different. It is a day to enjoy the company of family and friends. Lunch can last up to two hours. What people do not realize is that entertaining and everyday dinner meals are two different things. They love to entertain and when they do, their only concern is to make sure their guests have a good time and the best meal ever. In some cases, they will spend hours creating sumptuous foods, searching for the perfect wine combinations for the different courses, and setting gorgeous tables. They will prepare sophisticated old recipes their grandmothers or mothers have passed on to them. Other times, they will welcome you in their homes "A La Franquette", which really means with simple delicious foods, often paired with wonderful wines, and a colorful decorated table. A lot less formal is their working days dinner meals rituals. They will spend thirty minutes in the kitchen to prepare quick easy recipes, still enjoy a little wine, and set the most basic table for dinner. Dinner is served between seven and eight o'clock and no one worries, do not even think, about eating that late being a problem.

There is one other major difference I observe between French and American culture regarding food. Americans will easily have snacks, junky food types, laid out to eat all days long while at work, watching a sport game, or at a party. Let us not forget that huge cake, often served with ice cream, centering many buffets. French do not eat all day nor entertain that way. They will have coffee at work, but no donuts or goodies. They will watch a game together, but do not eat at the same time. They will have lunch or dinner later, the same way they normally eat or entertain. This kind of snacking or eating does not exist in the French culture. Even cocktails parties are meant to promote social talks and small amount of beautiful tasty foods. I often wonder if those snacks, junky types of foods, are one of the important factors in the weight problem in the United States.

Eight, French people do not exercise? Well, if you refer to gym or strenuous type of exercise, no. Few people play sports and overall, people working do not have much time to exercise other than during the weekend, which is often spent outdoors and shopping. The kids walk to school and do some sports within the school system. Some might be involved in a sport league after school. One fact and certainly one major factor that contribute to their health is that, they do walk a lot. Many use the transportation systems and walk on the endless side streets to go to work, shop, or just stroll chatting along with friends or family. When I worked in Paris, I use to walk 10 minutes to get to the subway station, another 20 minutes within the subway, and

another 10 minutes to get to my work. If you add the same time going back plus another 15 minutes for shopping for dinner, you are looking at 1 hour 30 minutes minimum a day. If I went out later in the evening, here we go again. I call this exercising!

Now, I am not advocating that you should just walk to exercise. As matter of fact, I suggest that you do whatever you enjoy. However, please do it with moderation. Unless you want to become a top athlete, there is no need to push your body to extreme. Trust me, you will benefit from a nice long walk in the park. As a former top athlete, I can tell you the consequences for pushing the limits. After many years of hard training and repetitive movements, part of my back gave up on me. I ended having surgery for a couple of ruptured disks. I was no longer able to play my favorite sports, tennis and table tennis. That did not make me happy. Even worse, I had to find other ways to exercise. I tried many new ways, bought exercise tools, and kept giving them away. Why, because most of the time, I did not feel like it. It was painful, I was tired, I had something else to do, and the list goes on. The truth of the matter was that I did not enjoy them. I eventually realized that I enjoy riding a stationary bike while watching my favorite TV show or a movie. Walking outdoors, while taking unique pictures was also fun to me. Those two forms of exercises have helped me healing and strengthening my back over the years. Today, I am able to play some recreational tennis, table tennis, and teach again. With moderation, I can enjoy what really makes me feel happy, isn't what life is all about!

Ninth, French people drink wines with every meal. Ok, I admit they drink a lot of wines, but saying that they do at every meal is simply an exaggeration. By example, they don't for breakfast! Seriously, often they will have mineral water and/or a glass or two of wine with their meals. When entertaining, they will offer you an aperitif such as Champagne or Kir Royal (Champagne with a little Cassis "blackcurrant"), a few appetizers (small amount) or nuts before enjoying a meal. By the way, Champagne is often paired with desserts. In the last few years, they have reduced their consumption of alcoholic drinks. However, wines are still a big seller. The younger generation is particularly embracing bolder and fruitier wines coming from the New World. Between their cheaper prices and their remarkable quality, the French wine industry has to re-think their strategies in order to stay competitive.

Tenth, when French people travel; they do maintain their way of living, when it comes to food. They want to enjoy food and experience new cuisine the same way they often do at home. I asked many French people what they looked for while traveling. The consensus was that they want a restaurant that offers a variety of food that represents the specialties of the region. They want to enjoy the local flavors and taste the chefs' abilities to enhance those local ingredients. They do not want a chain type restaurant that only serves you the same boring type of food no matter what town you are visiting. Traveling is about experiencing different cuisines even the worst.

Now that we explored some of the most common facts and myths about the French, it is time to discuss how French people really stay trimmed over the years.

First, do not underestimate the simple facts that they eat smaller portions, a wide variety of foods, lots of fruits and vegetables, and they walk miles.

Second, as my husband said to me one day “the French work to enjoy life and great food, Americans live to work and make money”. That is so true and such a huge difference. I want you to take a minute and think about this. What would you prefer?

Third, they have discipline and will power. Everyone learns and practices these rules since a very young age. Not just regarding food but, also in many other aspects in their lives. They know that certain things are not good for them. They will give in here and there, but certainly not every day. Trust me they are not perfect! After they do, they know they have to make up for it right away. They know it is a question of balance. They are consciously doing it and don't think much about it. They also accept the sacrifices that such discipline and will power require. However, they will tell you that it is not quite a sacrifice but rather a way of living. I like to compare this way of living to riding a bicycle. If you don't ride it, you get out of shape. If you ride it on regular basis, you are in good shape. Skipping a day here and there, to let your aching muscle relax, will not affect you much. In fact, it will be beneficial allowing the body to repair. When you live this way, there is also no guilt or very little guilt. Because you know, it is to your body best interest to do so. What I am trying to say here is, if you are dying for that juicy hamburger, fries, and a coke, do it but on rare occasions. Make it your day off, not your everyday meal.

Fourth, “The Saint-Tropez Diet” book details many important scientific facts about healthy eating habits that many people in France have followed for years. You will have to read the book to find out more!

Finally, there is one major overlooked factor, which I believe makes a huge difference. For years, I researched, traveled, interviewed, and observed the French and the American Diet. I learned valuable lessons while working in school cafeterias, the food and culinary industry, with scientists, doctors, and registered dietitians. However, it is the answer to one question I asked many people, that changed everything. The question was “How do you see food in your life?”

What stroke me was what most French people said: “Obviously, food is essential for our well-being. It is important to our culture, since we spend a significant time each day socializing around food. We show passion for food the same way we do for our loved ones, friends, work, or sports (soccer was named many times!).

“Passion for food” was the answer I was seeking for so long. That passion runs through my veins as any French person's veins. At an early age, we learned to respect food and not to abuse it. We learn to see food as another type of passion in life and that we should not neglect it for three reasons: the joy it can bring, the important role in our social environment, and its importance in our health.

I have shared for years those secrets with many of my friends and clients. Seeing the amazing improvement in their life, they urged me to write more on such subject. So, if you want to learn those secrets and change your life for the best, I encourage you to check my programs...

## Let's Stop and Think About How We Can Make Our Life Healthier



During my years of coaching I have ran into many people telling me “I just don’t have the time”. It did not matter if it was about working harder, exercising, cooking, spending time with the kids, and so on. My response to this question is always this. Do you really?

Since healthy lifestyle is my specialty and, particularly exercising and eating right for your body, let’s talk about that. People seemed to have lost sense of reality regarding such priorities in their lives. They no longer think about what they are doing, life has become almost automatic. People are stuck into habits, routines, and can’t seem to get out of them. They act like computers which have been poorly programmed. I like this philosophical comparison very much.

A computer does not have the ability to think like we do. The human body is way more sophisticated in that way, all a computer can do is what its “programmer” tells him to do and based on what it is programmed for. A computer will be capable to figure out the best exercises and food combinations for ultimate health, only if it was well programmed for that. In a way, the human mind being way smarter than a computer should be able to do that as well. Unfortunately, “the programmers”, people and us, are not necessary well-educated on those subjects and too often misguided by myth. It is sometimes people myth, often our own. The problem is that those myths, our bad programming, lack of interest in educating ourselves and willing to change are really the cause of many of our problems. If the computer is not well-programmed, the tasks it is supposed to do won’t be properly done or won’t be done at all. “The programmer” would have to think and fix the problem. He might even seek help from other “programmers”. No matter how many programmers are involved, the one thing they must do in order to solve the problem is to “think” and then act.

So why can’t we human just stop and think about what we do more often? The answer is simple, we choose not to. Just asking ourselves one question a week, take the time to think

about it, and follow up on it, can bring amazing results. I invite you to try it and will give you some sample questions at the end of this article. Let's explore one of those questions I would normally ask you, if I was your coach.

Who is in charge? For the computer, visibly the "programmer", though at some point the computer takes over to do the work it is asked to do. In a way we are like that. We are taught and then we act on what we learned. We eventually take control of our lives, though I admit sometimes we feel like we don't have any control at all. Those can be the fun rides or the painful rides! But ultimately, I believe that we control a lot of the decisions we make or can make. Two of those decisions are to choose to stay fit and to eat healthy. Most of us have the choice to exercise or not. Most of us have the choice to choose healthy foods or not. Most of the time money has nothing to do with it and for most people that is not the real fundamental problem. The real problem is us.

So why can't we humans stop and think about what we do more often? The answer is simple, we choose not to. We choose the easy way out by closing the door onto our responsibilities; we are basically lazy. Someone told me, they were not lazy but scared. For some that can be true, but for most it is not, it is laziness. We are also particularly talented with the blame game! All this is simply the harsh truth. If anyone wishes to make changes to their lives, one of the important steps is to have the courage to face such truth. Only then will you be able to move on and embark on an amazing voyage.

Back to exercising and healthy foods choices now. What do you think is the cost to ignore such responsibilities? I am not talking money, though there could be a debate on that, I am talking the most precious thing you have. Yes, only two words: YOUR HEALTH! Is it worth thinking about? Indeed, and if you don't think so, I guess you have some serious problems to solve. I won't elaborate on that, as anyone who disagrees with such philosophical idea won't be long enough around anyway. Joke aside, everyone should really think about this one.

So, let's start asking yourself one question a week on your health. You can start on the above ones or whatever you feel is important to you and that can improve your life. Think about it, act, and see the result later. I invite you to try it, as I know you will see amazing results. To help, here are a few other examples of questions you could ask yourself:

If there was an immediate situation where fitness would play an important role for you to survive, do you honestly think you would make it?

Do you think you need to make time for your health?

Do you think exercising and eating healthy is important?

What does really matter to you when it comes to exercising?

What effect do you think food has on your body?



Some fun ones:

Do I really need this piece of cake now? Will I really suffer if I don't?

Do I need to take the car to pick up the kids or can we walk this?

Do I really need to sit in front of the TV/Computer when I could go out and bike for an hour?

Do I stop by the fast food place for lunch after the kids' game or do I stop by the store and get everyone involved in choosing and preparing a quick healthy lunch?

You get the idea, so now go on and start asking yourself a question a week! If possible don't do this alone. Share the experience with a friend, co-worker, or partner as you will both gain out of the experience and be more objective about answers and action you need to take. Not to mention support to obtain results. Just have fun with this!

## Tomato Scare!



The Federal Health Agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration are investigating this new salmonella outbreak which may have originated possibly with tomatoes and jalapenos coming from Mexico or Florida. Only red plum, red Roma and round red tomatoes are involved in the outbreak. Cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes, vine tomatoes (still attached to the vine), or home grown are not involved in the contamination and therefore safe to eat.

This kind of situation reminds us once again how important it is to eat "organic" locally grown food! Though this might definitely be a safer choice, you still have to be vigilant regarding the safety of the food you eat. I always tell my clients to wash their fruits and vegetables in a vinegar wash. Use 2 tablespoons white distilled vinegar for 1-pint water to wash your fresh fruits and vegetables.

Rinse thoroughly once and finish by rinsing them under running water. Research has shown that vinegar helps kill bacteria on fruits and vegetables.

Here are a few other safety tips to follow:

- Don't buy bruised or damaged fruits or vegetables. When buying in bulk, discard any that are spoiled before refrigerating
- Always wash (as explained earlier) fruits and vegetables before eating or cooking

- Always wash packaged vegetables such as salad, even if they are pre-washed
- Keep raw meat, seafood, eggs, and any raw food prepped away from vegetables and fruits
- Don't stack up food, air must circulate freely
- Wash cutting boards, knives, and counter top thoroughly with hot water and soap. Repeat cleaning process every time you prep a different product
- At the end of the day and if you can't wash and sanitize in a dishwasher, wash your cutting boards with a bleach or white vinegar water solution and let air dry. Use bleach or white vinegar water solution to clean your countertops
- Refrigerate, as soon as possible, foods in warm weather

Following those few tips will reduce the chances of possible contamination and sickness for your family.

To Your Health!

## Can All Recipes on the Internet or Papers be Trusted?



As the internet is growing, so is the information available to all of us. Recipes are showing up everywhere. I recently decided to do an experiment which consisted of choosing a few recipes from various web sites without analyzing anything on the recipes and preparing them as directed. Unfortunately for me, only one out of four turned out to be good. So, this experience has taught me a valuable lesson and confirmed my suspicion. You cannot trust everything you find on the internet when it comes to recipes.

Just selecting a recipe, following its instruction and getting cooking without thinking about it is not wise these days. I advise anyone to read the whole recipe two or three times to make sure the ingredients and the procedure make sense to you.

Think carefully and if anything seems unbalanced or quantities seem out of whack, or your gut feeling is telling you something is not right, you will probably be right. Then what can you do about it?

First, you can forget about the recipe and look for something else.

Second, you can do the recipe knowing of possible problems and therefore proceed carefully. If you realize that things are not quite right along the way, just make adjustments. Any ingredient that has strong flavors or lots of spices should be added a little bit at a time to avoid disasters. Always taste before adding more. When it comes to salt, I see huge numbers. I suggest that you just add a little pinch at first and adjust at the end of cooking. By proceeding carefully, chances are you will end up with something good and avoid a major disappointment and not to mention a waste of money.

Third, using your experience and knowledge, you can make some changes to the recipe before you start cooking. This solution is good only if you really know what you are doing and particularly feel comfortable about it.

Finally, and probably the best solution is to combine the second and third solutions. I have decided to do that after this bad experience and found out that it really make a difference.

You are now aware of this, so remember to read a few times a recipe before deciding what you will do. Finally, keep in mind that cooking is like chemistry. Sure, you need good ingredients and good basis you can rely on, but you also need to be opened minded about everything and use your neurons to avoid disasters. All this is part of the fun and part of discovering and creating process.

## Knives and Cutting Techniques



Knives come in different materials, shapes, and sizes.

High-carbon stainless steel knives are the most popular because of their sharpness, non-corrosiveness, and non-discoloration with food. However, they are pricy but worth it, and they will last you a long time.

Carbon steel knives are also a favorite, being cheaper than high-carbon stainless steel knives. However, they corrode and can discolor foods.

Stainless steel knives are another type available. They have the disadvantage of being difficult to sharpen, but they do not rust nor corrode.

The best and durable knives are those that have the tang (the portion of the blade that is inside the handle) run the full length of the handle. The most useful knives are chef, utility, paring, boning, slicing knife, and a vegetable peeler. You need a sharpening stone, which allows you to maintain and true knife-edges. You will also need a honing steel to smooth out irregularities on the blades.

How to hold and sharpen a knife using a stone:

Hold the knife with one hand, placing your fingers close to the wider part of the blade but not over or under the blade. Only the index finger should sit on top of the blade for stronger grip. Place the blade at a 20° angle to the stone. Place the fingers of your other hand on the tip part of the knife for pressure. Make light even strokes in one direction on one side, starting from the

tip part of the knife and finishing with the wider part of the knife. Repeat the same process on the other side of the knife. You need to make 4 to 5 strokes per sides. More strokes may dull the knife. After sharpening, clean the knife to avoid any small particles of the knife that could get in the food.

**How to use honing steel:** Hold the honing steel with one hand and place the knife at 20° angle. Make light even strokes without much pressure starting from the wider part of the knife and finishing by the tip part of the knife. Repeat from the other side of the steel with the other side of the knife. Alternate both motions. You need to make 4 to 5 strokes on each side. Again, more strokes may dull the knife. When finished honing, clean the knife to avoid any small particles of the knife that could get in the food.

**Cutting techniques:** Hold the knife with one hand and use the other hand to hold the product. Curl the knuckles under so the knife stays right next to your knuckles. That motion will protect you from cutting your fingertips. A chef knife blade has different areas for different application. The tip is used to cut smaller items such as mushrooms, the middle part is the most often used for general cutting, and the wider part of the knife is used for cutting thicker items. There are two possible motions when moving the knife.

Starting with the tip sitting on the cutting board, move the knife down with the wider part finishing on the cutting board.

Place the blade at 45° angle and, using the top middle part of the knife, push down and forward through the item.

Both methods are good; use the one with which you are most comfortable.

There are many ways to prepare food. Here are the most common cuts used in my recipes:

Slice: thin, medium, and large

Dice: small, medium, and large

Brunoise: very small dice

Batonnet: small, medium, and large (like French fries cut)

Julienne: very thin rectangular slices cut into thin strips

Half or quarter

Buy some potatoes, carrots, onions, and practice your cuts. Then use those ingredients to make a soup. There is no need to waste. Have some fun!

## A Realistic Approach to a Healthy Goal for the New Year



The New Year is here and many of us have goals in mind. Some start working on goals and eventually forget about them or give them up within a few weeks. There is a very good reason for that. Most of the time goals are unrealistic therefore un-attainable. Expecting to reach many goals altogether is also a huge mistake. Best is to concentrate on one goal first and once accomplished move onto a second one and so on. So what goals are we talking about?

Some people want to lose weight, get in shape, improve their appearance, learn to cook, start to exercise, drink less soda, etc. Whatever the one thing you really want to do is, it has to really matter to you. No one is going to do it for you, **ONLY ARE THE ONE WHO WILL!**

You need to be mentally and physically ready, but also committed a hundred percent in order to succeed. You must acknowledge that the goal might not be easy and that you won't give up no matter what. Of course, that goal has to be reasonable and attainable. Do not forget to take into consideration your age. If you are in your fifties, it is not reasonable to want to achieve what a twenty-year-old can do or looks like. Too often people make unrealistic goals and that is why people give them up or never achieve them. You also must be ready for the ups and down and have strategy in place to overcome those times. And yes, it is normal to have relapses, but if you get "back on the horse" right away, you will succeed. No athlete becomes a champion overnight! Your personal conviction is also what will make a difference. If you convince yourself that you can accomplish that goal, chances are you will. Many people will tell you that year



resolutions are a joke, no one ever accomplish their goals. That is not true, so don't listen to them. Visibly they miserably felt on theirs! Remember you are the one in control and you are the one who is determined to make it happen no matter what.

Since many people asked my opinion last year on why they fell reaching their healthy goals, I will discuss a bit the subject. Though it is really a personal affair, there is really no solution that fits all. But there is one thing for sure that anyone can gain from, which is to start to look at your exercise and eating habits. To get healthy there is no way around. You need to exercise and eat healthy. The other thing I always recommend to my client is to get a physical. That sounds like a great idea, doesn't it! Here is one goal that should be easy and that everyone should do every year. I highly recommend doing so, particularly if you do not feel well, need to lose weight, know you are not really living a healthy lifestyle, have a family history of serious medical problems, or simply before starting an exercise program. Let's talk now about exercising.

First when starting an exercise program, too many people over-estimate their capabilities and the shape they are in. They also do not realize that the body needs time to recover from hard work, not just physically but mentally too. They often over-exercise bringing pain, stress, and also injuries. The result, many people give up on their exercise program and get very frustrated about the whole thing. If you want to avoid this situation, consider this. I encourage my clients, who haven't exercise for years, to start walking and start stretching. Why, because it is easy, does not involve any financial investment other than a good walking pair of shoes and is easy on the body. Then once your body starts to be in a little better shape, you can consider working harder and possibly pick up on a sport you used to like, or you want to learn. Some may want to join a fitness center. Whatever it is make sure it is something you enjoy. It must be fun in order to be able to keep up with it for months.

Back to walking, start by walking a few minutes a day, if this is all you can take. Keep building 10, 20, 30 minutes at a time until you build up to 45 minutes or 1 hour. If 1 hour is not possible in your schedule, break it into two half hours in a day. Do it 3 to 5 times a week, best being 5 times a week. Just do it and you will be surprised how great you feel afterwards. Don't worry if you start walking slowly, you will pick up pace before you know it, once your body is ready for it. And by the way, if you walk outdoors, do not forget to take your cell phone (for emergency), put sunscreen, take sun glasses, and have a bottle of water with you. Let someone know where you are going, if possible.

So you are feeling pretty good and getting in better shape. You are now ready to pick up a sport you enjoy or join a fitness center. Make sure you get the right trainer/coach to help you out. Build good foundations and build them slowly. If you do weight, start with light weight and a few repetitions. Then increase the repetitions and once they become easier increase the weight and so on. If you do that you will succeed and avoid many injuries I have too often seen.

A word regarding fitness trainer or coach. A good fitness trainer/coach is someone with whom you get along, who understands you, listens to you, can put together the right program/training for you, is able to read your body signals, knows how to push the right button to get you just beyond your limit, knows when to push you or not, and that places a priority on avoiding physical and mental injuries or burn out. If that person pushes you way too far creating stress and serious body pains or soreness that last more than 2-3 days, don't delay and look for a new trainer/coach. Keep in mind that a little soreness after a good exercise session is normal, severe pain is not. If you feel like avoiding your session or find excuses to re-schedule many times, something is either wrong with you, your trainer, your program, or simply you are not enjoying what you are doing. Evaluate and then act. If your trainer/coach is not able to see it, ignores it, nor willing to consider the problem with you, that is another reason to let that person go. He or she does not care about you and sees only his or her personal interest in your relationship.

Now about eating healthy. First, I often tell my clients to write a journal of everything they eat and drink for a few days. Then I ask them to look at it carefully. They are often surprised to see the amount of junk food, candies, and sodas/juices they take in. Then I ask them if they feel they could cut down on one thing without feeling deprived. Most of the time people can do that and found out after a few days that it is not so difficult. That is all it takes to start to get on a healthier road. So, what is it going to be for you?

Let me give you an example of a client who wanted to lose weight. He drank 3 sodas a day and wanted to start to change that, but could not imagine living without sodas. I suggested to him to buy the half size Coca Cola can instead of the regular size he was buying. I told him he still could get 3 cans a day and that made him happy! I also asked him if he could drink a glass of water right after he drank the soda can. He gladly accepted. Later, he told me that he was surprised that a half can could actually satisfy his thirst! The result, he cut the amount of soda in half, he drank some water he never used to do, and he lost one size pants in a few days. Just this simple goal made him realize that he could change his habits, lose weight without feeling deprived, and felt very happy about what he accomplished. Eventually he switches his Coca Cola for sparkling water with a little freshly squeezed citrus juice. Much healthier for him and he continued to lose more weight. He continued by looking closer to his food in-take. He viewed food and drinks in a different way and had fun doing it. This was the beginning of a brand new healthy lifestyle for him.

These are good examples of what I call reasonable attainable goals. If you are interested in learning more on how to establish healthy lifestyle, check my programs.

## Staying Healthy Over the Holiday Season



Staying fit over the holiday season is a challenge for most of us. Our routine is generally disturbed and keeping up with our healthy goals very much challenged.

From Thanksgiving to January, many of us run marathons from one party to another. Unfortunately, that type of exercise is not the kind that helps us stay fit. Family meals, office parties, buffets and, cocktails parties are generally associated with an abundance of rich fatty sugary foods and not to forget, alcohol. We also run from one shopping center to another and too often grab a quick bite in the car after driving through the fast food joint. It is not a good healthy habit. So, what are the consequences to all of this? Losing track of our dietary needs and exercise schedule can only lead most of us with a bigger waistline by January. How can we avoid such problem?

We all know that the holiday season is not a good time to start a diet or change our lifestyle. So, let's forget about that for now and get back to those thoughts in January. On the other hand, we cannot just give ourselves "carte blanche" to indulge like we will never have another time like that ever again. We must continue to control, as much as possible, our lifestyle and our healthy eating habits through the holiday season. We also need to acknowledge that allowing ourselves to enjoy the season, our family, our friends, and many parties is indispensable to our mental health. Therefore, we need to be a little more lenient with ourselves around that time of year. All we can do is our best and knowing that we did that will make the holiday season even more pleasure full. Now that we establish that very important point, let us consider some healthy suggestions to help us getting through this holiday season without too much damage.

First, we must make an agreement with ourselves:

- To eat less than we want too without depriving ourselves from holiday pleasures.
- To keep up with an exercise routine as much as possible
- To carefully choose our foods and drinks through the holiday season

Second, we must keep in mind some simple rules:

- While shopping just stop and sit down for twenty minutes and enjoy a small salad or half a sandwich with a soup and a small bottle of water. During that time, you can collect yourself and strategize your next shopping plan of attack.

- Continue and if possible, even increase exercise time to make up for those extra calories you will eat. Great time to have outdoors activities with families and friends. If you have the chance to live in cold area that has snow; build a snowman, ski, ice skate, have snowballs fights, etc. If you live in a warm climate, go on a hike, ride a bike, organize a baseball or soccer game, play tennis, go to the beach for a stroll or swim.

- Weigh yourself every morning, particularly to see if you are gaining weight. If you do, take immediate measures to lose it. Exercise and/or eat less, giving preferences to salads and light meals for the next couple of days. Some people may find helpful to keep a journal, if that works for you, do so.

- Before attending any social event, consider eating a small snack such as a fruit bowl, a small salad made with vegetables, or a healthy smoothie. This will cut down your appetite considerably and make up for the lack of vegetables and fruits (fibers) usually lacking around holiday goodies.

- Keep drinking lots of water throughout the day. It will help eliminate and to avoid eating and drinking too much.

- Go easy on alcohol and never drink on an empty stomach. Choose wine or beer over hard liquors. Try to stay away from mixed drinks; they are often loaded of calories due to high sugars in the mixes used to make them. Drink a glass of water before you start drinking alcohol. Sip on one glass of wine for a long time, don't just gobble up. Limit yourself to one or two drinks per event. Once you reach the limit, drink water or unsweetened sparkling water.

- Choose the healthiest possible types of food such as salads (with little dressing), grilled fish and white meat, steamed vegetables, fruits or vegetables with dip, whole wheat bread instead of crackers with a small amount of cheese or spreads, nuts (walnut, pistachio, and cashew), seafood (a couple of shrimp with cocktail sauce), and low sugar/fat style foods. If you must have that real rich creamy dish that you love so much, just take half of what you would normally do and add steamed vegetables and greens.

- Pleasure yourself by choosing something that you will really enjoy and that stimulate your taste buds while offering exquisite flavors. If you know it is not your best healthy choice, just

take a smaller amount and savor every bite of it. If you can't resist those delicious little cakes that are calling for you, have one but not three or four. Ok, I admit, this is where my weakness is. So, I am going to give you my secret to overcome such problem. Generally, I limit myself to three or four things. Yes, I know, I just told you not to do that, but you will understand soon how this can work. I take one or two small bites of each savoring slowly before swallowing in order to get the full flavor and texture. Very satisfying experience and not so calorific (equivalent to one dessert), but you must have a strong will to stay under control. If you know you can't control yourself, then just choose your very favorite dessert or one you never tried to experience something new.

- Do not stand next to the buffet table; this is too much temptation. Try to make no more than two trips to the buffet, one for appetizer/entrée and one for dessert. Even better, avoid dessert once in a while, particularly if you see nothing really tempting or go for a fruit.

- Use a smaller plate (if available) rather than a large plate. Do not pile the food on the plate. Take half the amount you think you want. Be reasonable and think if you really need to eat what you are about to take. I cannot emphasize enough portion control!

- Focus on the people rather than the food. It is a great time to mingle, catch on with old friends, relatives, co-workers or even make new friends.

In conclusion, I will say this. Enjoying life's pleasures with control is one of the key to well-being and happiness. So, remember: moderation, moderation, moderation. If you do, your first year resolution won't be losing the extra weight you gained over the holiday season. I will finish with a quotation from one of my favorite writer Mark Twain:

And keep in mind that a human being has a natural desire to have more of a good thing than he needs!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU, YOUR FAMILY, AND FRIENDS!

## The New Governmental "Plate"



If you are paying attention to it, please keep in mind that those guidelines are just guidelines and require more personal attention!

Yes, reducing the amount of food/portion in this country is certainly a good thing. Sure eating more vegetables, fruits, and choosing whole grains are good things. Increasing certain foods and portioning the way they did is however questionable to me. Why, because every person is different with personal health history and individual nutritional needs based on lifestyle. Not to forget that age matters too.

Just for fun, let's take an example using this "plate". Joe is diabetic-2 and knows nothing about food or nutrition. I will say that he does not exercise, just to keep things simple. What do you think will happen to him, if he follows this plate? He will have problem stabilizing his blood sugar level. Why, because of the amount of carbohydrates he may eat in one meal, based on this "plate". Carbohydrates are not equal and found in many different foods from fruits, vegetables, grains/starches, to dairies, and let's not forget those troubles makers (!) many commercial items (cereals, snacks, crackers, food bars, candies, bakery items/desserts, sauces, to name a few). Sure, he may have some fruits, vegetables, yogurt, and grains; but I guarantee you that he will have to balance that all throughout his day and not overload on one meal.

There is also no mention of fats, which is important as well. It is not about a quarter of this and a quarter of that; it is about personal nutritional needs based on age, health, and personal lifestyle. And that is also true for those who are trying to lose or control their weight.

## A Healthier Thanksgiving Meal



For our family, Thanksgiving time always brings back fond memories. Years after years, my husband and me would work long hours to prepare the special feast of Thanksgiving. That said, as health issues have risen with my husband's parents, we made a point to make the traditional meal a little bit healthier for them. Here are a few of the ideas we implemented and hope it will inspire you to make your family Thanksgiving a little healthier this year too!

**GRAVY** - Remove fat from the bottom of your cooked turkey pan. Add turkey stock, deglaze pan and bring to a boil. Thicken with a mixture of cornstarch and water. About 1 to 1.5 tablespoons of cornstarch will thicken 1 cup of stock. Start with 1 and see if you want a little more or not to reach the desired consistency. I often then add a couple of demi-glace spoons to enrich its flavor, but it is only an option for you. The last couple of years, I added sliced mushrooms to the sauce which added even more amazing flavor. I do not sauté, just add them with the turkey stock. With this method, you will have a lot less fat and calories than the usual turkey gravy (butter plus flour). For even leaner, omit the sauce and just serve with cranberry sauce or salsa.

**CRANBERRY SAUCE** - I usually prepare it (2 bags for our family) the day before and refrigerate overnight. Use at least 25% less of the package recommended amount of sugar. I assure you, you won't notice the difference. Over the years, we kept on removing even more sugar. At 50% less than called on the package, we reached the limit of acceptable tartness to us. You can use sucanat, moscovado sugar, maple syrup or honey, as a substitute to white sugar. For 1 cup of white sugar, substitute 3/4 cup for maple syrup or honey. I posted our favorite recipe online

here: [Blackcurrant and Cranberry Sauce Recipe](#).

**CORN ON THE COB** - I usually prepare it the day before. Remove husks. Using a double boiler, steam until tender. Remove and let cool. Brush each cobb with grapeseed oil, season to taste and transfer to an oven safe pan. Cover and refrigerate until use. I usually reheat the dish in the oven at 375°F for 20 to 25 minutes.

**CORN BREAD:** I, once, tried to make it from scratch. I have to admit that it was not as satisfying as the Marie's Calendar brand box. As it is my son's favorite, nothing makes me happier than seeing his smile and hearing how much he loves this corn bread by making it. Since we only eat it, once a year, I am glad to bend the rules during such special times.

**MASHED POTATOES** - I usually prepare it the day before and reheat it in the oven at 375°F for 20 to 25 minutes. Use low-fat milk or stock to mix with mashed potatoes. Use olive oil or grapeseed oil instead of butter. My preference goes to grapeseed oil, as it has a buttery flavor which works better with potatoes, at least to me! Add a few garlic cloves while cooking the potatoes and mash them with them. You can omit the garlic cloves and add garlic powder while mashing the potatoes. See my [Garlic Mashed Potatoes Recipe](#).

**SWEET POTATOES OR YAMS** - Many traditional casserole recipes contain high calories. So, we choose to roast them and just add enough seasonings to emphasize their flavors. We use grapeseed oil, pumpkin pie spice and some maple syrup or sucanat. I make the following recipe the day before and just reheat it in the oven at 375°F for 20-25 minutes. See our [Roasted Sweet Potatoes or Yams Recipe](#).

A side note: You may consider offering either mashed potatoes or sweet potatoes (or yams) to avoid too many calories. But then again, I understand tradition. So, adjust the amount available, so everyone takes smaller portion. A little bit less of both world can still satisfy a gourmand!

**TURKEY** - Cooking time vary based on size of the bird. A wise consideration is to check for doneness about 30 minutes, before expected finish time. Best safest rule is to check a thermometer reading. If your turkey does not come with one already in it, insert thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh (without touching a bone) close to end of cooking. It should reach 180°F to be properly cooked.

Here is a timing chart to help you, based on oven temperature of 325°F

10 - 18 lbs. unstuffed 3 to 3 and half hours, stuffed 3 and 3/4 to 4 and half hours

18 - 22 lbs. unstuffed 3 and half to 4 hours, stuffed 4 to 5 hours

22 - 24 lbs. unstuffed 4 to 4 and half hours, stuffed 4 and half to 5 and half hours

24 - 29 lbs. unstuffed 4 and half to 5 hours, stuffed 5 and half to 6 and a quarter hours

And don't forget to baste your bird every 20 to 30 minutes, so it stays moist!



Side note: It is always nice to keep in mind the health of your guests. White meat is leaner than dark meat. So, remember to particularly offer white meat for those who really must watch their diet. Otherwise have a little bit of both, so the last ones serving themselves are not just left with dark meat.

**STUFFING** - Make the stuffing separate from the bird, so less fat penetrates the stuffing while cooking. Substitute butter with a mixture of grapeseed oil and stock. Build up the flavors with diced onions, minced garlic, minced fresh herbs (thyme, sage, marjoram, rosemary, touch of nutmeg, basil, parsley) dry fruits, mushrooms pieces, chestnuts pieces and nuts (walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts or pecans). The possibilities are endless. If you like, I have posted [Our Favorite Stuffing Recipe Here.](#)

**VEGETABLES** - We stay away from casseroles, as they usually are full of fat and calories. Instead; we steam, roast or stir-fry a colorful array of vegetables that will provide a multitude of vitamins and minerals. We then eat them along with a little cranberry sauce or just by sprinkling lemon juice over them.

Or the day before, I would simmer green beans in water for 15 to 20 minutes or until tender. Once strained and cold, I transfer them to an oven safe dish. I add sliced almonds, dried cranberries (optional), grapeseed oil/olive oil and season with salt and pepper. I store refrigerate and then reheat in the oven at 375°F for 20 to 25 minutes.

**SALAD** - We prepare a salad full of dark greens with a few tomatoes slices, avocado pieces and a homemade vinaigrette dressing. They help with digestion and bring valuable nutritional values to the meal (carotenoids, vitamin K, chlorophyll and amino acids come to mind).

*Vinaigrette for 8 to 10 servings: 3/4 cup olive oil (sometimes I do 1/2 cup of olive oil and 1/4 cup walnut oil), 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard, 2 garlic cloves, 1 minced large shallot, 1/4 cup wine vinegar, 4 Tbsp. salad herbs, large pinch salt and large pinch of pepper. Mix with a hand blender and thin out with a little water, if necessary.*

**DESSERTS** - Not everyone is a baker nor may have time to make desserts, so nothing wrong to purchase from your local favorite bakery. Our guests often ask us what to bring, so I usually reply a pie or wine. That said, I always make our own pumpkin pie or chocolate Bourbon pecan pie, which are amazing I have been told, and often requested. We stay away from cheesecake that are full of fat and calories for this occasion. We already have enough calories brought up to the table!

Apple pie and Pumpkin pie are probably the healthier choices, while pecan pie is loaded with sugar, corn syrup and has lots of calories. Keep portion reasonable and you won't regret it for the next couple of weeks!

For less calories: We substitute frozen yogurt, sherbet or non-dairy frozen treat for regular ice cream. Instead of a scoop or two, we just add two tablespoons and let it slightly melt over a piece of pie. Those two spoons do the trick and reduce quite your calories intake compared to

regular large scoop of full-fat ice cream. You can also completely skip the frozen treat and just enjoy a piece of pie on its own.

**CONFECTIONARIES** - There is always someone who will bring a candy box, at least in our family. It is ok to have one or two at most, but not three or four. Favor dark chocolate 75% and above.

**WINES AND ALCOHOL** - Holidays are often associated with drinking in many families. Ours is no exception, but we tend to watch out and limit our takes to 1 to 2 glasses of wines or 1 to 2 beers that often men prefer.

For wines pairing with your Thanksgiving meal, here are my suggestions: Whites (Sancerre, Chardonnay, Riesling or Champagne) and for Reds (Beaujolais, Pinot Noir, Chateauneuf-du-Pape or Côtes du Rhône).

Want to learn to pair food and wine, [Check out my latest book here!](#)

**LEFTOVERS TURKEY** - We all love leftovers and turkey sandwiches. To make a healthier sandwich, here are my suggestions. Use whole wheat bread, 2 oz. turkey meat, mustard instead of mayonnaise and add lots of lettuce and vegetables. There are many great ways to use leftover turkey meat. Make vegetables soup, a salad, a pasta dish with lots of vegetables or chili. Just add some turkey and voila! No matter what you decide or favor, have fun and create your own family recipe. Great way to play with the kids in the kitchen too.

**SHOPPING LIST** - In another article, I just included an example of [Our Shopping List](#). Hope this will help you get organized!

I hope the sharing of our traditional meal will inspire you to create a healthier one for your family. Enjoying family, friends and the pleasures of the table are among some of the most important keys to well-being and happiness. Remember: moderation in all aspect of your celebration. Stay aware and in control. If you do, you won't have to apologize for your misbehaviors, face hangover, nor will you have to work hard for a couple of weeks to lose those extra pounds you put over Thanksgiving. When in control, it is easy to get back on track within a couple of days, if you immediately get back on your regular exercise and healthy eating routine.

I will finish with a quotation from one of my favorite writer Mark Twain: "A human being has a natural desire to have more of a good thing than he/she needs"!

**I WISH YOU ALL  
A VERY HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

## Just a Spoonful of Honey and the Medicine Goes Down...



We all heard the health benefit of honey and I often encourage my clients to substitute honey for sugar. We also know about its soothing power for sore throat when mixed with hot milk or hot tea.

But what we did not know is this. Last week, researchers at Penn State College of Medicine announced that they found that "buckwheat honey" was better than many over-the-counter cough suppressants at reducing the severity and frequency of nighttime coughs in children. Now not all honey, particularly "buckwheat honey". Why you ask? Because it is one of the darker varieties that has the most antioxidant and antimicrobial properties.

Curious, I went to buy a bottle. Not so easy to find this little guy! I only found it in one of my local health/farmer's market store. Interesting enough, this "buckwheat honey" has a pretty strong aroma. Might not be good in every recipe, but certainly a great addition to pantry and especially your medicine cabinet!

## **Evaluating Our Shopping Habits**

I hear it every day, big corporations are killing small businesses!

The questions, most of us need to ask ourselves are:

- Are we willing to buy, on regular basis, from our local farmers markets, small family businesses, small local restaurants instead of the big supermarket and restaurant chains?
- Are we willing to pay more than we would from those chains?
- Are we willing to continue to accept the lesser and lesser quality products those superstores or restaurants chains seem to offer us?

If yes, then stop complaining; but be aware that small businesses will continue to disappear. Big corporations and government will continue to gain power over the markets and our lives.

I think it is worth evaluating our shopping habits. Don't you think so?

## **No More Excuses, Please!**

According to a new national poll of more than 1,000 women, here are the excuses women gave for not eating healthy. Published in Shop Smart Magazine, June 2012

When I saw these excuses, I had to get to my computer and write. Oh, I have heard those excuses hundredth of times. But before I speak on those excuses below, I must make it clear that it would be hypocrite of me to say, I am the perfect example of health. I am doing fine, but I know I still have a little way to go! I would be fooling myself thinking I will become perfect one of these days too. Got to be realistic and keep a sense of humor too!

Anyway, I could go about healthy eating habits for hours, but as time is of essence to most, I will try to make a few quick suggestions to help offset those excuses!

### **57%: Eating healthful foods is too expensive**

Yes, eating out healthy is more expensive and challenging than finding cheap junk food, no doubt. This is what I recommend to my clients. Figure out your monthly budget for eating out, the cost of the healthy restaurant you would like to eat at, and then you can figure out how often you can go out. Another consideration is to instead of eating out with your friends or family, so often, occasionally, have them over your place. Suggest to them to rotate places with those who can handle such parties. Prepare together a healthy meal and share the expenses. It will be cheaper than going out, I assure you. It is a lot of fun too and more time to share together. And if you don't know what to do, hire a personal chef, like me, for one time and learn how to put it together. Everyone can also bring something homemade that they consider healthy. You can then debate, in a friendly and constructive way, on how great the food was or how you could make it a little healthier.

Eating in, on the other hand, is not that much more expensive. Many of my customers told me, they were surprised my food bills were not much more than theirs. But, boy was it much healthier! Sure, it was different ingredients, as I mostly stayed away from processed foods, individual packaged foods, and bottled drinks and sodas. I buy in bulk whenever possible and package in smaller portions for my clients. Maybe you can share groceries with a friend, family, or neighbors. Get together and talk it over. You can have the kids help you with individual snack portions, they love doing it. Have filtered water at home, it saves lot of money over bottles of water. Watch where you are spending your money, you will be surprised. Here is one major example where I can see many women saving money. Instead of going to Starbuck every day, make your own coffee at home with a good machine. The machine will be paid back within just a few months and it is all saving from then on. The cost per homemade cup of coffee is about 0.50 cents vs. \$ 2.50 or more ordering out. Per month, you would save a minimum of \$2.00 x 25 days = \$ 50. That money can now go towards healthier food or something else. And yes, you still can treat yourself at Starbuck on special occasion. By doing so, it will become even more

special! I also recommend you check your house expenses, break them down by categories. You will then be able to see where your money is going and how you can redistribute it in a healthier way. Trust me; you will be surprised to see where your hard-earned money is spent on. Not to mention that you probably will have enough money to prepare healthier food!

#### **47%: Social settings are too tempting**

First, your social setting should not dictate your general eating habits. You have a choice in the matter. One major eating choice that you have is to eat less, no matter what is served to you. Just that will make a huge difference, particularly if you do not; supposedly, ever have a choice to eat healthier foods. Second, don't you think your health is worth a little self-discipline and to think about that unhealthy social setting of yours? Pause and think about that. Pause long enough to really think and possibly coming up with alternatives. Ask yourself if this is what you really need? Could I still manage this challenging situation with just a little of what is offered to me? Could I eat something healthy before socializing, so I don't have to order much of that unhealthy food? Could I look further than the obvious food choices and find out if I have the possibility of getting something healthier? You would be surprised how your sudden interest in better foods may interest your friends and bring change to your social environment. Never hurts to try and ask, does it?

#### **39%: Life is too short; I want to enjoy what I eat**

Yes, life is short. But you are making it even shorter if you embrace unhealthy lifestyle. You also are setting up yourself for more health problems sooner than you possibly could have. There are plenty of healthy foods that taste fantastic. Have you considered taking healthy cooking classes with a chef that truly knows about healthy eating and cooking, with many years of experience, someone just like me? I know cheap shot again! Seriously, if not me, I am sure you can find someone as reputable and qualified as me. Trust me, healthy food can taste amazing and, once you taste what I am talking about, you will be all over healthy food and so will be your family and friends. Finally, it would be a good thing to ask yourself these questions. What do you wish for your life expectancy? Think of what you are doing now. Do you think the lifestyle expectancy you wish for is a possibility with the lifestyle you have embraced? Honestly, is it? Do you think you will be able to do anything you want in the shape you maybe by then? Becoming aware of that may simply open the door to the changes you may need to make now, to reach such goals later on. One little step by you, big potential for you in return!

#### **33%: It's hard to find healthy options when eating out**

Please see my reply on this subject on the 57% comments.

### **29%: I don't have time to prepare healthy meals**

Oh, that is my favorite one and I heard it way too many times. Let's see. How much time do you spend in front of the television, on the computer, playing with your cell phone, or talking with your friend on the phone? Come on be honest and tell me that you can't really find 20 to 30 minutes in your schedule to prepare a quick meal. Don't tell me you don't have time to throw even a quick meal with a salad, a yogurt and a fruit. Sorry, but I don't believe you. Consider reprioritizing what is important in your life. I hope you can see the value of having healthy eating on the top of your list.

### **25%: My family prefers less healthy meals**

Ok, I heard that one before too, particularly from mothers who said their children won't eat healthy. First, children live by example, so mom and dad, start eating your vegetables and fruits. Second, you cannot expect your child to like something new right away. Keep introducing the "new or disliked" food and find different ways to do it. Camouflage the flavor, if you have too, with something the kids like. Don't ever give up even over a tantrum. "You don't want to eat it; sorry that is all we have tonight!" Gosh, I remember my mom saying that so many times and, guess what; I realized later the value of that sentence. I did it with my son and he eats everything today. And be assure, your kids won't starve to death, they have amazing survival skills. Sure, everyone has his or her favorites or food they don't really care for, who doesn't. What is important for you parents is to make kids understand the important of the nutritional values in foods. It is important that they understand that eating is not just about personal pleasures and eating a variety of foods will help their healthy growth. Scientists have proven that it takes about 12 trials before a child, or adult for that matter, could start to consider something they dislike eatable.

Now I am going to dare saying something here. Many young parents I have seen out there do not take charge of their kids 'meals. They let kids dictate what they want. How do you expect teaching them all I just talked about and how to like any types of food? Trust me; what you are doing is not the right way. Take charge and create meals that will educate your kids' taste buds. They will thank you later. Older generations did it and we all survived, didn't we!

### **20%: Unhealthy habits are too hard to change**

Not true. They are if you try to do it all at once. Start by changing one thing. I had a client substituting sparkling water with freshly squeezed lime juice for his usual soda. Less sugar and the fact he lost some weight encouraged him to think more what he could change. When he felt comfortable with the first change, he went after something else. I also suggested to him to start reducing, just a little bit, how much he ate. Then a little more and so on, until he ate half of the enormous portion he was used to eat. By doing so, it gave him time for his stomach to get adjusted and not feeling hungry as well. He ended up losing a lot of weight and felt pretty good about the way he accomplished it. One thing he told me that I never forgot. "What you

taught me is another way to look at food and mostly common sense, something I forgot for too long!

**18%: Healthy foods don't satisfy my appetite**

To anyone who thinks this, I am going to simply say, you are not having well-balanced nutritious meals. Consider hiring a RD or nutritionist to help you. I assure you that healthy food can satisfy most appetite!

**13%: I'm not sure which foods are healthy**

I am glad to see this excuse at 13% though I would like to question what people think is healthy these days!

Now if you feel you don't know, education is available in many forms. There are community colleges, hospital classes, websites, medical journals, RDs, nutritionists, books, television shows, and chefs to learn from. I know there is also a lot of information out there which can be confusing. However, with a little personal research along with common sense, you can find yourself pretty quickly on the healthy train!

Now if education is not your thing, I will then tell you what I often say to my clients "Buy foods that are as close as to what nature produces. They are often the healthiest food for you; except for the food you may have allergies issues or medical reasons to avoid them. Be adventurous, explore and try new foods. Have fun and share your experience with others.

And by the way, if you have suggestions, please feel free to send them, it is all about helping to improve the health of others!

Wishing you good health, Chef Marie



## Staying in Control During the Holiday Season!



During the holiday season, we tend to eat foods that are not necessary good for us. I am particularly talking about unhealthy fats, sugar, and white flour. For me as a Chef, I get to taste way too many foods during this time of year than any other season. That is my job requirement, quite a challenge, if not a curse, to my diet. Joke aside, I have managed not to gain weight over the holidays for years and aware of the health "hazard" such season brings! So, what is my secret? I will share with you some of the ones I feel made such difference for me.

I exercise an extra 30 minutes a day during my weekly schedule.

I doubled my normal intake of my favorite flaxseed brand, Premium Gold. Why, because I know it helps lowering my cholesterol, balance my hormone levels and eliminate.

I don't stress about it, but rather carefully watch my eating habit by monitoring my nutritional intake. So, if I see I had too much rich food to taste during the early hours of my day, I make sure I eat extra lean during my evening food intake.

I give priority to plant based protein and lean animal protein such as fish and organic chicken

I give priority to vegetables, greens, and salad for my meals.

I avoid using fatty dressings, rather just a bit of little olive oil and citrus or vinegar.

I cut down on breads, particularly the sweet buttery ones. I never ever put butter or any other butter substitute when I eat a small piece of bread with a meal.

I use low-sugar soy milk or almond milk, when needed.

I eat a plain low-fat yogurt and/or only a small piece of cheese a day

I drink lots of water throughout the day, including green tea.

I don't have desserts with my meals other than a fruit in the morning and one at lunch

I limit my alcohol beverages, choose a glass of wine or Champagne over mixed drinks, as they often contain more sugar.

These are some of my general rules I follow. I truly carefully monitor my daily food and drink intakes, so things don't get quickly out of control.

What ultimately makes it fun to me to do this, is that I make it a game with myself. How can I compensate for the "indulgence" I just had to make?

Over the years, I have realized it has taught me a lot more than I originally thought. It has actually taught me a lot in regard to nutritionally balancing my daily food intake.

More importantly, it has kept me to stay in control, particularly around the holidays. Try it for yourself and have some fun with it!

By the way, it is great way to educate children as well. At school, teachers can initiate such games around the holidays without having to bring the subject of "healthy" food, which sometimes shut off kids, as some think healthy food taste terrible. Though it is not true, it is still how some view healthy foods. Instead approach the game from the perspective of educating kids on all foods.

After all they have their purpose in life! It is up to us to understand it and adjust based on our personal needs.

Happy 2012 Thanksgiving to you, your family, and friends! Chef Marie

## Wine Tasting In Solvang & Santa Ynez Valley



Modeled after a small town in Denmark, Solvang-California attracts many tourists who come to enjoy its architecture, stores, Smorgasbords, Danish pastries, Hans Christian Anderson Museum, and the 209 years old Santa Ines Spanish Mission. The Fables of Hans Christian Anderson are world known, “The Little Mermaid’ adopted by Disney are among my favorite. In the village, you can see a small replica of the Copenhagen’s Little Mermaid status.

The thatched roofs, windmills, ice ring, warm mulled wine, Danish pastries aromas and holiday atmosphere reminded me of the Christmas outdoor markets of Europe. The local bakeries are great places for breakfast, lunch or to grab a cold or hot drink accompanied with a Danish or couple of cookies during the day. I loved the way the “Aebleskivers” (cooked pancake dough balls) were prepared; only turned over by an expert hand when golden brown. I hate to say but the Danish pastries and cookies were a disappointment, as they were made from a mixture of butter and shortening, rather than pure butter which would have given them the flakiness and taste that I expected.

Over the years, Solvang has become not just a Danish town attraction, but also gambling and wine tasting destinations. Its modern Indian Casino looks like a smaller version of a Las Vegas Hotel and Casino. I am happy to report that it has a non-smoking section at a second level of the building, which really isolate the smokers from non-smoking gamblers. However, its non-smoking section is very small, mostly a couple of dozens of slot machines and one poker room with a small bar. We did not gamble nor stay long there, as our trip was mostly about wine

tasting. We walked through Solvang, shopped and even enjoyed a couple of wine tasting places such as at Dascomb and Jule Hus.

We dined at a great local Chinese restaurant, Mandarin Touch, where we enjoyed a sautéed mixed vegetables platter and Moo-Shu, a typical Pekin dish prepared with chicken, prawn, vegetables, and plum sauce wrapped in Chinese thin pancakes. After a long day, we were ready to crash to bed!

The next morning, hundreds of vineyards awaited us in the Santa Ynez Valley. We decided to first drive to Rancho Sisquoc winery in Santa Maria, one winery I discovered years ago. I still love this place, particularly their white wines. To my surprise, their red wines have quite improved over the years. Their Chardonnay and Sylvaner wines remain my favorites and had to bring a few bottles home.

Next, we drove back through the valley, as we decided to do most of our wine tasting in the cute Victorian village of Los Olivos on the stage coach road. It is a convenient place and has attracted many wineries over the years. No doubt, this little quint place mainly survives because of wine tasting tourism. As we almost reached town, we ran into small farmers showing off their treasures. One sign "Lavender Farm" attracted us and we decided to follow it. Passing the property gate of Clairmont Farms, we ended up on a narrow road lined up with huge old trees and lavender bushes which lead us to a few small colorful shakes. We immediately got seduced by their charming architectures which reminded me of the traditional lavender blue, yellow and orange colors of Provence. In a tiny shop, the combination of English and Italian lavender aromas exalted our senses. As I was invited by the young store keeper to try their products, I chose a body cream to try on my hands. It was soothing to my dry skin and I loved the pure refreshing lavender aroma that arisen from it. Cooking lavender, dried lavender branches, lavender body creams, facial creams, scrubs, oils, and diffusers reminded me of the various selections you would find in lavender specialty stores in Provence. We decided to bring home some cooking lavender and sachets to refill our closets. If you love lavender products, I invite you to check them out at [www.clairmontfarms.com](http://www.clairmontfarms.com)

Driving on, we quickly realized how lavender aromas invaded our car. We finally reached Los Olivos, our wine tasting destination of the day. The well-maintained village houses are host of many local wine makers and you can easily spend a day tasting endless list of wineries. Name like Alta Maria, Andrew Murray, Qupe, Coquilot, Verdad, Bin2860 International shop, Carhartt, E&T, Epiphany, J. Ludlow, Kaena, Longoria, Toretti Family, Consilience & Tre Anelli, Presidio, and Verdad attracted us. As the merchants were fine with it, we enjoyed sharing our wine tasting in order to limit the amount of wine we drank, save money and still allowing us to get a great tasting experience of many wines without getting drunk! We encountered wonderful people from all over the world, exchanged experiences with wines and found the sellers very helpful and friendly.

In the center of town, we visited a small gourmet shop that offered a variety of local foods and kitchen gadgets. Next to it, was a great lunch place, Panino Restaurant, where we enjoyed wonderful freshly made sandwiches and salads. Continuing walking on main street, we reached the famous Fess Parker Wine Country Inn and Spa, a great place to stay overnight. Across the street, a store attracted us, because of its uniqueness. It was a horse supplies and wines store, a combination we found rather funny. After a few glasses of wine, who wouldn't!

Moving on, we turned left and ran into Felix Mattei's Tavern. The hotel opened in 1887 and accommodated rail and stage passengers making north and south connections in Los Olivos. Across the street was St. Mark church, which by the way, had great public bathrooms! The church was getting ready for an old-fashioned Christmas celebration where small merchants were selling their Christmas creations. Somehow the smell of roasted walnuts reached my nostrils at this point and, as we could not figure where it was coming from, we decided it was time to go back to Solvang.

We rested at our hotel for an hour, before getting ready for dinner. We decided on Cecco Ristorante, a well-known local rustic country Italian restaurant. As we opened the restaurant door, the warmth that emerged from the wood burning oven pizza, was more than welcome on this freezing cold evening. Their menu offered a variety of salads, pizzas, pasta dishes, traditional desserts like Tiramisu or Gelato with Biscotti and wonderful local or Italian wines. We decided to order a salad and the biggest pizza they had. The Insalata Cecco made with fresh mesclun greens, tomato, ricotta, chick peas and lemon vinaigrette opened our appetites, while giving us a great light transition after drinking so much wine all day. The Cinghiale Pizza (wild boar sausage, tomato, smoked mozzarella and braised kale) reminded me of real Italian pizza and was excellent. The crust was thin, with a good crunchiness on the edge, while the pizza ingredients were very light, flavorful and well proportioned. The smoked mozzarella was amazing and added so much flavor to the pizza. We did not order wine, rather bottles of water, and were very pleased by the waiter's understanding, enough is enough after a whole day of drinking! The service was excellent, and I definitely recommend this place, if you are in Solvang. Just make sure you make reservation, as the place is very busy with locals and tourists. As the outside temperature was dropping to the twenties, we did not linger in Solvang streets and regained our hotel room where a warm fireplace awaited us.

Before heading home, we stopped by a local grocery store to purchase a few local wines we enjoyed during our tasting the day before. As we did some research before heading to the wineries, we find out that some wines were cheaper at local grocery stores than at the wineries. So, beware, do a little homework first, as it can save you from 3 to 10 dollars a bottle and, for a rare one, even more!

Personal wine tours are seasonally organized by Chef Marie and only operated on personal demand to private parties. It is an affordable way to visit great wineries, get educated and enjoy the company of other wine enthusiasts. My wine tours are available for Napa/Sonoma

Valley, Santa Ines Valley, Oregon and Washington. Soon available to France and other European countries. Stay tuned and don't hesitate to contact me to organize your personal tour!

## Cleansing Series - Blood Cleaners



Did you know that some foods can enhance your body abilities to get rid of toxins and chemicals absorbed from environment (fertilizers, pesticides), daily cosmetics uses, household cleaners and so much more?

This picture offers you just a few ideas of some of the ORGANIC FOODS that assist your body abilities to cleanse your blood. Enjoy some of them every day. Don't forget to drink water all through the day!

## Cleansing Series - Part 2: Liver Cleansers



Did you know that some foods can actually enhance your body abilities to get rid of toxins and chemicals absorbed from environment (fertilizers, pesticides), daily cosmetics uses, household cleaners and so much more?

This picture offers you just a few ideas of some of the ORGANIC FOODS that assist your body abilities to cleanse your liver. Enjoy some of them every day. Don't forget to drink water all through the day!



### Cleansing Series - Part 3: Pancreas Cleansers



Did you know that some foods can actually enhance your body abilities to get rid of toxins and chemicals absorbed from environment (fertilizers, pesticides), daily cosmetics uses, household cleaners and so much more?

This picture offers you just a few ideas of some of the ORGANIC FOODS that assist your body abilities to cleanse your pancreas. Enjoy some of them every day. Don't forget to drink water all through the day!

## Cleansing Series - Part 4: Kidney Cleansers



Did you know that some foods can actually enhance your body abilities to get rid of toxins and chemicals absorbed from environment (fertilizers, pesticides), daily cosmetics uses, household cleaners and so much more?

This picture offers you just a few ideas of some of the ORGANIC FOODS that assist your body abilities to cleanse your kidney. Enjoy some of them every day. Don't forget to drink water all through the day!

## Cleansing Series - Part 5: Gallbladder Cleansers



Did you know that some foods can actually enhance your body abilities to get rid of toxins and chemicals absorbed from environment (fertilizers, pesticides), daily cosmetics uses, household cleaners and so much more?

This picture offers you just a few ideas of some of the ORGANIC FOODS that assist your body abilities to cleanse your gallbladder. Enjoy some of them every day. Don't forget to drink water all through the day!

## Cleansing Series - Part 6: Lymph Cleaners



Did you know that some foods can actually enhance your body abilities to get rid of toxins and chemicals absorbed from environment (fertilizers, pesticides), daily cosmetics uses, household cleaners and so much more?

This picture offers you just a few ideas of some of the ORGANIC FOODS that assist your body abilities to cleanse your lymph. Enjoy some of them every day. Don't forget to drink water all through the day!

## Cleansing Series - Part 7: Intestines Cleansers



Did you know that some foods can actually enhance your body abilities to get rid of toxins and chemicals absorbed from environment (fertilizers, pesticides), daily cosmetics uses, household cleaners and so much more.

This picture offers a few ideas of ORGANIC FOODS that assist your body abilities to cleanse your intestines. Enjoy some of them every day. Don't forget to drink water all through the day!



## Foods Known To Cause Bloating!



Reduce sodium in your diet and continue to enjoy some of those foods, just not all at once!

## Foods Known To Reduce Bloating!



Eat some of those foods!

## La Tortilla Oven" Warmer



Like many cooks, I love cooking gadgets and amazingly found one I did not have. So, when I came across “La Tortilla Oven” warmer at a local farmer’s market, I had to purchase one to try it. I will make my story short.

We heated up a few homemade tortillas and, to our surprise, turned out to be as warm and amazing, as when we eat out at local Mexican restaurants. It also worked great with reheating pancakes, crepes, flat breads, rolls, tortilla chips, baked potatoes, or steamed vegetables. All came out moist, just like if you just cooked them.

Needless to say, we love this product and I, Chef Marie, highly recommend it!

Go to [www.latortillaoven.com](http://www.latortillaoven.com) where you will find the various company designs, sizes and lots of information. Viva “La Tortilla Oven”!



## A Plague With No Visible Cure Insight!



The world, its political and religious arenas are very sad these days. It really disturbs me reading or listening to many comments made by leaders, Democrats or Republicans, left or right parties in many countries, and individuals which I find not helpful in any way, to the contrary.

From the spreading misinformation, lies, propaganda to schizophrenia of some; all I see is the end result, more division and anger among us. We have lost the ability to respect, listen, be compassionate and exchange honest ideas in a peaceful way. And it is not just here in the USA, just look at the world news, as it could not be clearer how fast this plague is spreading.

No doubt, people are discouraged, and many feel disarmed towards what is happening in so many countries. Worst, they are worried and becoming desperate which open the gate of hatred. Some are willing to destroy lives for their beliefs, while others run away from poverty and wars in the hope for a better peaceful life.

I have wondered if it is helpful letting such immigration take place, in some case on a massive scale towards certain countries, while ignoring the truly deep infectious wounds that ravage the world. I question if we are allowing it to spread even faster, when we are not able to provide what people expected and burden more systems that are already stretched?

Many people near death often reflect on their lives. They have regrets and would do some things differently, if they had a chance to play the game of life again. Do we need to get to that death point to reflect on what is happening in this world? Are we willing to face this dangerous plague and take the necessary steps to stop it?

No doubt, that is a huge question and will require much openness and calmness to explore the solutions that await us. The world history has certainly shown us that greed and hatred were not the way. History has also shown us that religion and peace don't go hand in hand. Yes, I said it, but frankly too many religions condemn, even promote death to those who don't follow their beliefs. Much of the issues in the world today are related to the unequal distribution of wealth and religion. Nothing new, history is repeating itself over and over.

So what is the solution that won't make us repeat history? What will it take to implement it? These are the "quite challenging" questions I recently asked myself. I would like to open such debate with as many people as possible, as I believe in the power of collectivity and humanity.

Let's make it a "reality game" that will have the best price ever given, one that will benefit us all. People perspective can be very powerful and a life changing experience. Think about it, would you please! And listen, I don't care if you use my words or not. It is not about me, but rather about the message. Do share such questions with friends and all your outlets.

Finally, I would like to ask a favor which is to please come up with positive and respectful ideas that will be argued in such manner as well. I truly believe we can respectfully have a debate and find the solution to this plague. Let's go and bring on the biggest courteous debate ever!

P.S. What can I say, I am a dreamer who pursue my dreams. Many have become a reality in my life, so I thought, why not this one. The difference though is that, I am aware I have no control over it, we all do. That offers an enormous potential, doesn't it!

## **Gut Feeling!**

Most of us have heard this before, an unhealthy gut can be at the root of all sorts of health issues from cold, insulin resistance, inflammation to weight gain.

Many scientists recognize that certain bacteria in our guts can regulate insulin resistance process and inflammation in a positive way. Though we recently started to see a surge of “natural” sources that contain powerful probiotics to promote gut health, not all are healthy.

I suggest you look for yogurt sources that are plain organic or to make your own at home using organic ingredients. Keep in mind that products loaded with sugar, artificial sweeteners, artificial flavors and colorants are considered, by many scientists, to be the cause for weight gain and many health issues.

According to Dr. Eran Elinav, MD of the Weizmann Institute of Science’s Department of immunology, they have found a link connecting artificial sweeteners, through the bacteria of our gut, and the development of the very disorders they were designed to prevent. He is calling for a serious reassessment of the uses of such substances which are omnipresent in our processed food today.

For more information, go to <http://time.com/3380013/artificial-sweeteners-obesity>

To me, it is just another reason to continue promoting eating organic, the least processed and as natural food as possible!

## How to Reduce Bitterness In Organic Kale



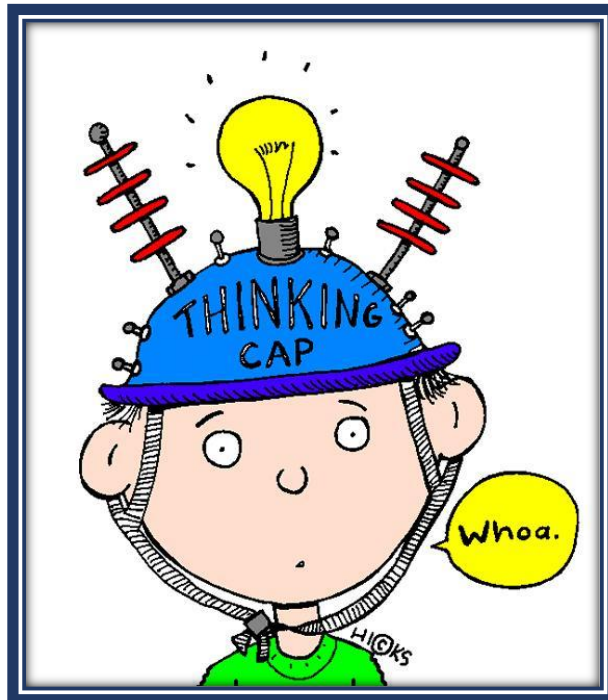
I love organic raw kale, but the bitterness originally bothered me.

After a few experiments, I have concluded that the best way to reduce its bitterness is to do this.

Divide the leaves in small bundles that can fit in the palm of your clean hands. Massage each bundle in your hands to breakdown the fibers for about five seconds. You will notice the kale color darkening, as you do that. Wash the leaves twice and dry with a salad spinner. Now the kale leaves are ready for you to enjoy raw in your salad, smoothie and so on.

Note: If you do a lot of kale, rinse and pat dry your hand once in a while, as the oil will build up in your palms.

## Experience Life



Yesterday, one of my client asked me if she should let her teenager get a job? This is what I said which quickly convinced her to do so.

I was 13 years old when I got my first job and babysat twins. It was the easiest job in the world. We had lots of fun and they taught me much about the power of laughter.

At 14, my second job was to coach a dozen of ping pong 9 to 12 years old kids. Though it was a little challenging at time, I loved it. They taught me much about the importance of organization and group support.

At 16, my third job was to take a group of 25 teenagers from Paris to London. The ferry ride went fine, but lost 4 kids in London train. As a teenager myself, I thought I could control the world. Oh, did I learn a lesson that day. More importantly, how I need to improve my people skills and develop patience.

My fourth job, that same year, was to coach a couple of Para-Olympics ping pong players. They were eager to listen, learn, practice and worked harder than I asked from them. They taught me much about overcoming challenges, will and respect in life.

Years later, I finally realized how valuable those lessons were.

## The Solution To Childhood Obesity



### **WANT TO GET RID OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN THE US?**

The **SOLUTION** is right there on this video!

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=french+school+meals+sunday+morning&FORM=VIRE1#view=detail&mid=A4F0BBA6B67E470671E1A4F0BBA6B67E470671E1>

Come on, let's **INVEST** in the future of this country,

in our **CHILDREN SCHOOL LUNCHES.**

Many benefits would come out of it  
from better health, better social skills to creating many new jobs!

## Bistro Liaison



Being French, I have to check out French restaurants!

While in San Francisco are, do consider visiting this charming little French place "Bistro Liaison" right in the heart of Berkeley. Using fresh, seasonal and local ingredients; the owner, Chef Todd Kniess, will delight you with a variety of authentic French gourmet dishes.

His menu includes French Onion Soup, Moules Marinière, Snails, an array of Croque Monsieur (either made with chicken, salmon, ham or lamb), Croque Madame, Spinach and Goat Cheese Salad, Salade Nicoise, Bouillabaisse, Sole with Cognac Sauce, Truite Amandine, Cassoulet, Duck Confit, Steak au Poivre, Bœuf Bourguignon, Rosemary Chicken, Ratatouille, Spinach with Currant and Hazelnuts and Black Truffle Mac & Cheese, just to name a few.

As portions are reasonably served, you can then indulge in a light Tarte Tatin, Crème Brulée, Chocolat Fondant, Profiteroles, Ile Flottante or Walnut Cake for dessert. Can't wait to go back when I am up there again. For more information, please feel free to visit [Bistro Liaison](#)

## **American Academy of Pediatric Recommendations**

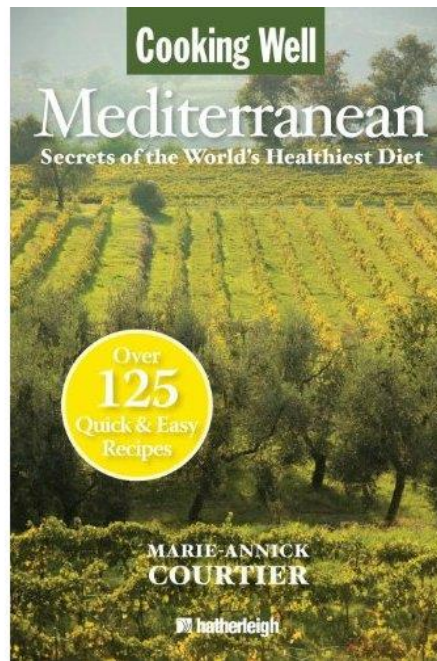
I find the latest American Academy of Pediatric article interesting and hope you will enjoy it too.

Indeed sugar, fat and sodium should be used very strategically. I would add, they should be used lightly to the point they enhance the natural flavors of a food prepared. That said, many nutritious foods can taste fantastic without the addition of them. A steamed broccoli with just a little lemon juice can taste amazing to an educated child taste buds!

To see the article, go to <http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/AAP-Recommend-Whole-Diet-Approach-to-Children's-Nutrition.aspx>



## **Cooking Well: Mediterranean and Exercise, A Solution To Heart Disease!**



Did you know that heart attacks are killing close to 300,000 women in the US each year, six times more than breast cancer?

The numbers are staggering. According to the Women's Heart Foundation, 8.6 million women worldwide die from heart disease each year, representing a third of deaths in women. 434,000 American women have heart attacks annually; 83,000 are under age 65 and 35,000 are under 55. Under age 50, women's heart attacks are twice as likely as men's to be fatal. The great news is that we know most of the causes: family history, obesity, diabetes, smoking, abnormal blood lipids, hypertension, high blood pressure and stress. We also know that the amazing power to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, lessen symptoms of hypertension, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), joint pain and many other rheumatoid problems, as well as certain skin ailments.

So, I think it is worth spreading the words that the Heart Association, clinics, doctors, cardiologists and many scientists today are recommending. Embracing a lifestyle that emphasizes the Mediterranean diet and exercise has shown to be the best diet to protect your heart today. Since 2000, it has been my personal mission to promote such diet and many of my books reflect that.

Cooking Well: Mediterranean will show you how to embrace such lifestyle, familiarize you with the foods found in such diet and will offer many recipes that are easy to prepare, flavorful but

also easily adjustable to your likes. The major difference with my book is that I have balanced the nutrients for you and limited fat and sugar in order to promote even better health than what originally most Mediterranean books offered until now. If you are ready or simply curious about the Mediterranean diet, you can purchase my book at <http://www.chefmarie.com/CustomPage.aspx?PageID=7>

I am also available for coaching. I have helped many people to get fit, change lifestyle and will be glad to assist you in any way I can. Embracing such healthy lifestyle is easier than most people think. Many of my clients have said to me that half the battle was to take the first step and be willing to try new foods. Once they got through just one week, they realized it was easy and a quite enjoyable adventure!

You could be the next one on the wonderful track of healthy weight, physical fitness and become a great healthy cook. Come and join my healthy family. Nothing would make me happier than to see you become healthy, happy and even becoming the next advocate for the Mediterranean diet to your friends and family, once you realized all its beauty!

Testimonials: Delightful recipes for healthy living, as well as delicious recipes for heart-healthy meals. Michael P. Cecil, M.D., F.A.C.C., Cardiologist Medicine at Columbia University

Chef Marie's recipes will open your eyes to how easy and fun it can be to maintain a balanced diet. With the fresh, healthy ingredients in her appetizing meals, you will provide your body with the nutrients it needs to keep you healthy. Vincent F. Macaluso, MD

With a truly comprehensive approach to fine dining and devotion to the health and longevity of her clients, colleagues, and students, Chef Marie has been the ideal culinary expert for patients at The Park Avenue Diet Center. Stuart Fisher, MD.

## Kean Coffee - Artisan Roasters - Part 1-2



Considered one of the pioneers of the coffeehouse phenomenon in the US, Martin Diedrich, is a well-known Master Roaster with decades of expertise in the coffee world. Knowing that, I could not refuse a private invitation to go listen to one of his lecture.

After looking over his beautiful hanged coffee plantation pictures, dozens of us sat in his home garden surrounded by coffee plants. Martin explained that, just like a delightful glass of wine, a great cup of coffee starts with the best optimal fruit source. But the similarities do not end there. Terroir, growing, harvesting, loading, transporting, processing, storing and all the way to crafting a cup of coffee will ultimately affect the end result. Later on, I suggested that properly pairing a great cup of coffee with a pastry or chocolate can make your taste buds really happy, he agreed!

There are over seventy-five varieties of coffee plants in the world. Generally grown in highland tropics, the plants are rarely affected by pollution or diseases. Soil composition, climate, growing condition and savoir-faire impact the personality, characteristic and quality of coffee beans. They are all very unique and some can be recognized by appellations or estates names.

Once the fruit has reached the desired ripeness, they are hand-picked. During harvesting, men and women can be seen carrying 100-125 lbs. bag of coffee over their shoulders. Twice a day, they will walk miles before reaching the processing area. Then starts a long hand process. The seeds will be extracted from the fruits through an endless water bath process. Next, they will be separated by sizes and go through a vibrating table to be sorted by density. Finally, they will go through a conveyor belt to extract the defected seeds. The smallest perfect seed called "Pea Berry", is highly priced due to its exquisite concentrated flavors. The defected seeds often end up in "instant coffee" production. It takes 20 lbs. of beans to produce 1 lb. of coffee product or 30 x 8 ounces cups of coffee.

Next, Martin and Karen (his wife) invited us to their private home plantation in order to experience the endless hand process it takes to create a great cup of coffee. We noticed that some plants were still blooming which gave us the unique opportunity to enjoy their wonderful citrusy fragrance. Some plants were filled with hundredth of red looking smooth berries. We were invited to take a bite into the fruit which was sweet and berry like flavor. The seed was small and greyish in color. Once we collected all the ripen fruits, we ended up with a nicely filled large deep basket. In a non-chlorine water-bath, Martin extracted the seeds by crushing the fruits between his hands. He continued by washing and straining the seeds over and over until the water was clear.

As we reached the end of part-one of our lecture, Martin weighed our harvested seeds. There should be enough for about 1 pound of coffee, once roasted. Until then, the seeds will go through fermentation and then spread over his patio to naturally dry them for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. On daily basis and, many times throughout the day, the seeds will be rotated with a rack to promote an evenly drying process.

We thanked our hosts for a truly unique experience and told them how much we were looking forward to part-two. So, stay tuned to learn all about the roasting process and how to make the best cup of coffee in the world!

Meanwhile I would like to invite you to check their stores and classes at <http://www.keancoffee.com>

## Kean Coffee - Artisan Roasters - Part 2-2



Just as a reminder, the first half of this article can be found at [Kean Coffee Part 1-2](#)

Our small group gathered around a table at Kean's Coffee Shop in Newport Beach. We anxiously awaiting Martin and Karen for our second part of our educational lecture.

Martin reminded us that our "precious" little beans went through a fermentation process, before drying on his patio. Such process is used to remove the mucilage of the beans. Placed in a container filled with water, the beans were left to ferment 52 hrs. Such time may vary depending on many factors from the amount of coffee, water temperature to the humidity. Experts determine the end of the fermentation period by feeling the beans between their hands. Often during such process; lactic, acetic and propionic acids developed preventing mold growth, a problem that can occur when coffee beans go directly to the drying process without passing through fermentation first. The beans were then moved to his patio to air dry for approximately 3 weeks.

As Martin place the dried beans on a parchment paper, we noticed their rich creamy pale color. We hulled the beans, rubbing them between our fingers, and discarded debris (picture 1). We were now left with a small greyish colored pea berries. To separate them by sizes, we then passed them through a series of numbered portable screens (picture 2). Finally sorted by density, they were ready to be handed to his professional roaster (picture 3). He reminded us how important all those steps were in order to have a uniform roasting process.

As we moved towards the back of the store, we faced a majestic silver and red drum roaster (picture 4) where the beans will develop their aromas and colors. We were told the process will take 12 to 15 minutes for our small batch. Occasionally, using a little wooden scooper and a special opening in the roaster, the expert hand will check the roasting progress and making sure the beans do not get scorched, due to a too high temperature. Molecular changes are monitored over a computerized system and demand strict attention. As we witness the various changes of colors, we also noticed the slow rise of temperature through the roasting time. At some point, we went from 325°F to 375°F and even a higher close to the end. Finally, our beans were ready to go to the next step, grinding.

Waiting for our cup of coffee, Martin surprised us with an amazing smooth and sweet tea made from the cascara (coffee bean's fruit husk - picture 5) that he also sun-dried on his patio. It is a common drink among coffee-growing nations and rarely exported. The tea (picture 6) is filled with vitamins, antioxidants and provide a good amount of caffeine. Delicious warm, it can be quite refreshing cold on a warm day. While enjoying our tea, we noticed warm water was slowly poured over our coffee grinds and cups were getting set for tasting (picture 7). To my taste; I found my cup of coffee on the watery side, with a light bitterness to it, but mostly lacking flavors' depth resulting in almost inexistent finish (picture 8). Martin felt the same way and on a scale of 100, gave it a generous 86. That said, the result was quite pleasantly surprising, considering the coffee beans came from trees growing in a coastal suburb of southern California. California has produced amazing world class wines over the years, could the California Mountains be a possible environment for coffee growers, I now wonder?

Curious, I inquired about the process of making "decaffeinated" coffee and Karen gladly answered my questions. She said that there are, generally, two main processes used in the industry. One is to use chemical solvents to strip caffeine molecules from the green coffee. Such process can be the reason why some people experience headaches, allergies or discomfort when drinking coffee. Kean's coffee and other small purist houses use a "Swiss Water" decaffeinated process which gently remove the caffeine from the beans, often up to 99.9%, while maintaining the flavors and specific characteristics of the original beans. No chemicals are used. If interested to learn more about this scientific process, I invite you to check this video <http://www.swisswater.com/video>

We finished by reviewing his amazing and attractive fresh roasted coffee selections (picture 9) of **their store**. Inventory is always on the short end, no more than 2 or 3 days ahead, as freshness is key to a perfect cup of coffee, Martin emphasized. Passed five days, the coffee oil starts becoming rancid and another possible reason why a coffee cup can give you stomach pain or other discomforts. Needless to say, I will check the package dates from now on!

I hope you enjoyed my report, as much as I enjoyed Martin and Karen lectures. They are planning to offer some classes soon and I highly recommend them. Because of this wonderful experience, I have discovered a fascinating art and wonderful treasures that demand more

respect than I ever imagined. Thanks to both of you and your exquisite coffee, you have managed to excite my senses and have a whole new perspective on a cup of coffee, since your invaluable teachings. Do visit Kean's Coffee Store in Newport Beach in **Newport Beach** and **Tustin**. I sure will again and hope to see you there!

## **Breast Cancer and Food Intake**

Recently, a new client of mind asked me if there were foods she should avoid being diagnosed with breast cancer. After a little research, here is what I found out and thought I would share it with my readers. I hope it may help someone else out there too!

Diet does play a huge role in health and is partly responsible for about 30 to 40% of all cancers today. Though genetics and environment do play a role; lifestyle, smoking, poor eating habits, carrying excess weight and a lack of exercise are huge factors.

Just in 2015 alone, more than 230,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer and more than 40,000 breast cancer deaths have been reported so far. Interesting enough, breast cancer is less common in countries that have a diet rich in fresh natural based plant foods and do some sort of exercise on regular basis.

An organic diet is a recommended choice, as it offers less chemicals, preservatives, colorants and additives in foods. Supported by scientific research, the medical community recommends staying away from certain foods for breast cancer patients. However, one must keep in mind that every person is different, has different health history, take different medicines, follow different treatments and, therefore, should work with a doctor or dietitian to figure out what is best for his or her personal situation. Needless to say, NO ONE DIET FITS ALL!

That said, here is a "starting" list of foods to avoid as much as possible that are recommended by various specialized doctors and nutritionists:

Alcohol

Tobacco

Caffeine

Sodas and sugary drinks

Processed foods containing nitrates, but also other chemicals, preservatives, coloring and additives

Junk and fried food

Highly refined carbohydrates

Eliminate trans-fat and partially hydrogenated oil such as Margarine and Crisco

Limit to a minimum: Corn, peanut, safflower, soybean, sesame, sunflower, butter and coconut oil

Prefer a limited amount of canola oil, olive oil and grape seed oil for cooking and homemade salad dressing

Limit salt and highly salted foods such as chips or pretzels

Cured, smoked meat and fish



Pickled and fermented food

Charcuteries

Red meat and any animal products grown with hormones

Blackened meat prepared through barbecuing, grilling or broiling

Desserts, pastries, ice cream and confectionaries made from white flour, high fat and sugar.

Sugar and artificial sugars

Phytoestrogens foods such as:

Soybean, tofu, miso, tempeh, edamame, soymilk and all products containing soy

Lignans such as flaxseeds

Cereal bran

Peas

Pinto beans

Lima beans

Wild yam

Alfalfa

Clover

Black cohosh

Licorice

Anise seeds

Non-organic personal care products (shampoos, soaps, lotions, toothpaste and hair coloring) that may include any of the above ingredients.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** If a specific medical treatment and/or chemo-therapy are involved, talk with your doctor and registered dietitian about your food intake; as some foods, medications and supplements can interfere with treatment and vice versa.

Feel free to take this list with you, when you visit your doctor or registered dietitian. Awareness is the first step that lead to change and healthier lifestyle. Let us know if you find out other foods should be avoided, as we love to share with all!

Websites I recommend for information and support:

[www.cancercenter.com](http://www.cancercenter.com)

[www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org)

[www.breastcancer.org](http://www.breastcancer.org)

[www.nationalbreastcancer.org](http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org)

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

[www.5.komen.org](http://www.5.komen.org)

[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

[www.healthywomen.org](http://www.healthywomen.org)

## Meats and Our Health

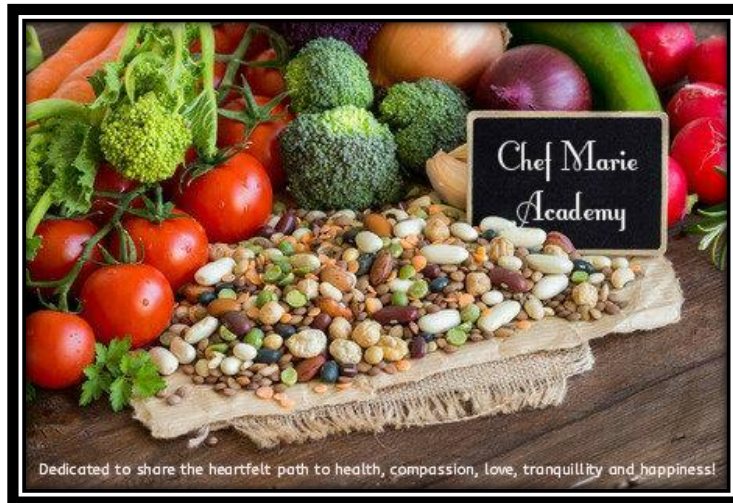


The latest “International Agency for Research on Cancer” report does not really bring anything new to the table. For years, we have been aware of the various health issues associated with eating meats and particularly processed meats. We can’t discard the fact that cancer is on the rise. But we can either ignore the data that show that smoking, alcohol, excess weight, lack of exercise, unhealthy processed foods, sunlight, genetics, radiations, chemicals, hormonal changes, virus and the pollution of our environment all contribute to cancer and many other diseases as well.

For sometimes, farmers have spoken about numerous health issues from which they suffer, allergies and cancer to name a few, due to their exposure to harsh chemicals and pesticides while farming. Environmentalists have also spoken about the need to reduce meats consumptions, so we can cut down on animal feeds and wastes. Their environmental impact is no secret and the dangerous increase of greenhouse gases are there to remind us of it. Interesting enough, recent figures show that we have reduced our meat conception worldwide. Awareness, environmental concern and growing healthier lifestyle trends are probably at the source of this change.

Many scientists and medical doctors support the idea that, on occasion, a reasonable amount of meats is fine for most. It should be part of a balanced diet that includes wild fish, legumes, grains, vegetables and fruits. For more than 15 years now, I have supported such philosophy and will continue to do so. That said, the quality of such foods and eating with moderation must be of high priorities. I am convinced they hold the key to health and that **organic farming** (or close to it as much as possible) will allow to maintain a sustainable agricultural heritage that is vital to all, our health and to many generations to come. As individuals, we have the power to make such healthier choices. Let’s keep exercising such power, as it helps growing an industry that tries best to preserve the life we have been given and the beautiful world we live in.

## My 5 Holiday Saving Tips



Here are my tips for you on “How to save money on groceries during the holiday season”!

As most of us, you will probably attend Christmas parties and go out for Christmas shopping. This is what I personally do to ease the pressure on making homemade meals and limit calories during such hectic times.

**1. I pay attention to my schedule**

**2. I figure out the number of meals I will be having out of my home for my week**

**3. I then buy fresh ingredients for only the days I know I will be eating at home minus one day**

**4. I reduce my portion to end up with the needed meals**

Just this action reduces my daily calories intake and allows me to enjoy a treat here and there without worrying of gaining weight over the holidays.

**5. I favor one cooking session during which I prepare**

- Grilled or stir-fried lean proteins (chicken, fish or Tempe)
- Steam a full basket of vegetables
- Make a large pot of vegetarian soup
- Pre-wash lettuces, tomatoes, small cucumbers, radishes and fruits which I hold separately in plastic bags.
- I shred carrots, two days' supply is best to retain quality

Voila, healthy lunches and dinners will then be ready in a flash....

**WISHING YOU A WONDERFUL 2015 HOLIDAY SEASON!**

## Be A Mentor!



Coming back from weeks of traveling and talking to various business owners, I have come to realize something very worrisome.

Very few companies are willing to take on mentorship or train young people these days. Meanwhile many are complaining not being able to find qualified applicants for the jobs they wish to fill. Not long ago, this was not an issue at all. I am sure most of us in our fifties or sixties can remember started working with summer job, internship or a few months training which often lead to full time jobs. Rather than talking further of this problem, I would like to talk about the solution we can all be part of.

Be a mentor, employ and train a young person this summer. Why, because such experience can be the beginning of learning and growth for all of us!

If we want well-trained work force, we must invest in their training. That said, young people must understand they too have a responsibility towards the investment companies make for them. The trainees must show exceptional character, work hard while giving their best, respect authority and go beyond expectations. If both sides give their best, no reasons for such mentorship to be a joyful and fructuous ride for all.

And let us remember that to have a well-trained work force, it all starts with good basics. We must all learn, understand and practice with patience to build the foundation that lead to further personal development, intellectual growth and sense of responsibility towards self, others and the world we live in.

So be a mentor and make a difference in this world!

## Sonoma Wine Country, Here We Come!



After a 7 hours' drive, we arrived to Sonoma. Our week agenda is filled with fun adventures from winery tours, food and wine pairing tastings, driving through the Armstrong Redwoods, see Bodega Bay and the San Andreas fault and go to Charles Schultz museum to kiss snoopy!

Our first stop, Ferrari-Carano Winery. As we passed the gate, we could see the majestic architecture of Villa Fiore. We parked and followed a narrow path that lead us to a small garden. Following various paths and crossing small bridges, we could only admire the precise work of their gardeners. Trees, shrubs, colorful flower planters, statuettes, streams and fish ponds charmed us to our souls. We lingered in our peaceful surroundings, admiring the beauty of nature. As people entered the garden, we decided to move on. A Portuguese cork tree attracted our attention, before we left the garden.

Passing a few gorgeous bronze sculptures, we finally reached the villa. We were immediately welcomed by a couple of warm staffers. As they found out we had no reservations, the staff completely lost interest and did not even asked us if we would like to do a tasting. Having to visit the ladies room, I managed a peek of their beautiful downstairs cellar and wine tasting room. I was surprised to see that it was completely empty. Anyway, we did not pursue anything, as visibly we were not welcome and walked out. We admired the small patio and sloped vines hill view, before heading back to our car. Next stop coming up!



## Sonoma Adventures - Pedroncelli Winery



Before visiting another winery, we decided to drive a little bit around Dry Creek Valley and its hill. Rick eventually led us to the end of a road which opened to a gorgeous view. Left with the critters around us making strange noises, this little scary cat was ready to leave. With a loving embrace, he convinced me to linger a little longer. What is better to die, by love or a bear, I thought! Laughing at my thoughts, I barely heard him saying “let’s go” as he was opening the car door. That said, with a sense of relief, we finally left and headed back to the wine country.

We quickly reached our next destination, Pedroncelli Winery. With one person at the bar, the host quickly welcomed us with a big smile. He explained that four generations have called Geyserville - Dry Creek Valley, their home since 1927. He inquired about the types of wines we liked and suggested we tried his 6 flight wines from their tasting selection.

We started with a 2015 Sauvignon Blanc, East Side Vineyards for \$15. With its light, refreshing, crisp flavors (apple, lime, tropical fruit and honey), right acidity and a lingering silky mouthfeel, we find it very pleasing. One to take home for sure, we told him.

Then came a Pinot Noir, a Merlot and a Blend which we were not really fond of. A 2013 Zinfandel, Mother Clone (\$18) followed which we immediately liked. With strong berries aromas at first, fig and plum emerged as we tasted the wine. It stayed with us until a touch of black pepper tickled our throat and lingered through the slightly tannic finish. Very pleasing indeed and on the buying list grows on.

We, then, tried the 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Three Vineyards (\$19). Aromas of plum and toasted oak, followed by cherry and black pepper enchanted us as well. Once again, a keeper for the travelers at such reasonable price. We finished with a 2011 Vintage Port (\$20 for 500ml) that was pleasant but certainly not for us lovers of Portugal Porto!

We left very happy with our pleasant experience. I highly recommend you stop by this place, if you are in the area. I invite you to visit [Pedroncelli](#) and check the different wines tasting and pairing they offer. Stay tuned more to come!

## Sonoma Adventures - Kendal-Jackson Winery



We could not pass this free “Kendall-Jackson Winery” invitation to enjoy their food and wine pairing experience. Their staff immediately welcomed us with a glass of refreshing rosé. 10 minutes later, our hostess walked us through the building to end up into their beautiful decorated back yard patio. Many people were gathered around large to intimate tables shaded by large umbrellas. At this point, I already noticed the well-trained staff dancing around and servicing their clients with warmth and smiling faces. Our server brought us a small pamphlet and welcomed us. She briefly explained how everything works, while pouring our first glass of wine. She introduced us to the wine. To our surprise, Chef Matthew Lowe brought us our first course, introducing himself and his food to pair with our wine. Once done, the waiter came back to pour our second wine and removed our plates. This well-orchestrated ballet continued until our last plate. All I can say, bravo and thank you for this wonderful experience. Before leaving, my new friend, Chef Matthew, gave us a tour of his spotless kitchen while exchanging wine pairing ideas. We did a tour of their well-maintained nursery, a beehive and where their “farm-to-table” dinner series take place. Do visit this beautiful property and check their website at [www.kj.com](http://www.kj.com).

Here is the menu of the day that we enjoyed!

2014 Grand Reserve White Meritage

Lake County, Mendocino County

Lightly poached local rock cod tossed with compressed estate cucumbers, dill and



Radishes and dressed in a horseradish mirin vinaigrette

2013 Jackson Estate Camilot Chardonnay

Santa Barbara County

Bean, Grain and Chardonnay Seed Bread, Hummus, Baby Vegetables  
And Preserved Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette

2014 Jackson Estate Seco Highlands Pinot Noir

Monterey County

Smoked Liberty Duck, Wood Ear Mushrooms, Pickled Radishes & Strawberries,  
Toasted Sesame Seeds and Mushroom Aioli.

2014 Jackson Estate Alisos Hill Syrah

Santa Barbara County

Sweet Tea Brined Snake River Farms Pork Belly Slider  
and Red Wine Barbecue Sauce

2013 Jackson Estate Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

Alexander Valley, Sonoma County

Lamb and Beef Kefta, Toasted Farro and Green Garlic Puree

2013 Grand Reserve Late Harvest Riesling

Monterey County

Buttermilk Mousse and Frischkorn's Caramel Corn

## Sonoma Wineries: Davis Family Vineyards



Concentrating on familiarizing ourselves with Sonoma region, we first decided to take a drive around the farm lands. We noticed how poor some small farms were while most wineries appeared well off. Our wine tour was loaded with more than two dozen wineries for the next few days. Our first stop then was Davis Family Vineyards. Family owned, this winery reflects its beliefs of preserving the earth while creating good quality wines. The tasting room structure along with its organic garden was quite charming. As we were welcome by two young smiling ladies, we paid our \$10 tasting fee and reviewed the five choices of the day.

We started with an inspired Loire Valley wine, a 2014 Cuvée Luke, Saralee's Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$30). With a light peach, mango nutty and jasmine flavors, this spiced and slightly viscous wine on the palate was quite a surprise to me. I enjoyed it, but not enough to spend that much on it.

The 2015 bone dry Cote Rosé, Russian River Valley (\$25) which had a light strawberry and nectarine aromas. I was not quite to my taste.

Again their 2012 Pinot Noir, Starr Ridge, Russian River Valley (\$55) - 2012 Pinot Noir, Campbell Ranch, Sonoma Coast (\$65) and 2013 Cab Five, Rockpile Ridge, Sonoma County were interesting wines, but overpriced for their quality I thought.

My favorite was the 2011 Syrah, Soul Patch, Russian River Valley (\$42) which offered wonderful flavors of blackberry, cherry and hint of violet candy. Its subtle cured meat taste, spicy finish and good tannin made it a wine we really enjoyed. One bottle had to go home for further review!

I invite you to visit their site at <http://davisfamilyvineyards.com/index.php>

## Sonoma Wineries: Quivira



Bio-dynamics, Quivira Winery is a must visit, if you happened to be in the area. Not only they have a very friendly professional staff, but also know how to make you feel right at home. Finding what you enjoy and helping you select five wines among their long tasting wines list is part of the game. That said, they are not that strict on the number and will gladly let you try a couple more wines. Rosé, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Grenache, Rhone style wines, Mourvèdre, Syrah and Zinfandel to blends were our choices. Most wines were priced between \$30 and \$48.

Sauvignon Blanc, Grenache and Mourvèdre did not do it for me, but when we started on their Zinfandel series, my taste buds became happier and happier. Zin Reserve, a couple of their Flight Zin and Katz Zin had all subtle unique red and dark fruits flavors. The mouth feel was amazingly refreshing while pleasing at the same time. With generally good acidity, tannin, a touch of spiciness for some and flavorful lingering finish; those Zin are among some of the best wines I came across so far in Sonoma Valley, I thought. We finished with their 13 Goat Trek Vineyard Blend (\$ 55) which turned out to be my favorite wines out of their selections. We left very impressed and will definitively look further into ordering a case of those great wines in the very near future!

I invite you to visit their site at <http://www.quivirawine.com>

## Sonoma Wineries: Buena Vista Winery



If you want to go back to the history and pioneers time of California wine industry, Buena Vista Winery is the place to visit, I was told. After a challenge to find it at the end of a canyon, we finally reached Buena Vista Winery.

Once parked, we walked along a long narrow path, lined up with beautiful landscape and trees. Wooden squares with old looking photos slowly introduced us to the history of this place which was founded in 1857 by a European emigrant, Agoston Haraszthy. We finally reached the first majestic stone building and could only be amazed by the beauty around us. We sat on the patio for a few minutes admiring the structures in front of us. Not having reservation, we were unable to join any filled tour. They allowed us to take a quick look at the inside of the historic building, hotel, wine tasting room and cellar. Having tasted their wines before, we decided to move on as our schedule was tight for the day.

Definitively a must see, especially for my European friends. Check out their website for more history, beautiful pictures, wines and information for making reservation

<https://www.buenavistawinery.com>

## Sonoma: Stonestreet and Gundlach Bundschu Wineries



We did not know what to expect with our next two stops. Top of a hill, **Stonestreet Estate Vineyards** view of the valley was beautiful. Their 2013 Red Point Chardonnay and Gold Run Chardonnay were good but not enough to us to justify spending \$55 on such bottles. The 2013 Estate Cuvee (\$45) and 2010 Rockfall Cabernet Sauvignon (\$100) were good, nothing spectacular, and certainly not worthy to us again spending that kind of money on either one. Gread friendly place, so I invite you to visit them at [www.stonestreetwines.com](http://www.stonestreetwines.com)

So we moved onto our next destination, **Gundlach Bundschu Winery**. Walking into a well-maintained rustic barn, I felt like we walked back into the far west times. Looking around first, we could only admire the historic pieces and beautiful wine bottles. Approaching the large wooden bar, a friendly host welcomed us. Once our \$20 tasting fee paid, she shared with us some of the winery history. Build in 1870 and bonded #64 in the state of California, this winery was founded by Jim Bundschu and its descendants are still running the estate.

We started our tasting with a 2014 Estate Dry Gewürztraminer. Pear, jasmine and orange blossoms came through the nose, while ginger and coriander spiciness delighted our taste buds. I was immediately under the charm of this well-made wine. I love Gewürztraminer, but never had found one in the US that I could seriously fall for. This one was it and at \$22 a bottle, I thought a great buy.

We went on to try their Pinot Noir, Zinfandel, Cabernet Franc, Merlot (which my husband loved and we had to get a couple of bottles for him), Tempranillo and Vintage Reserve which were of good quality, but not really of any big surprising discovery. Wines were priced between \$39 and

\$50 for most, except for the Vintage Reserve at \$100. Truly an interesting winery in general and generously open to share their know how. The cellar is gorgeous making worth taking the tour or enjoying one of their special cave dinner they offer on occasion.

The above pictures were taken a Gundlach winery. Check their place and beautiful tasting room at <http://www.gunbun.com/visit-tasting-room>



## Sonoma: Dry Creek Vineyard



The story of **Dry Creek Vineyard** is fascinating. Founded in 1972 by David Stare, it was the first new winery build in Dry Creek Valley after the prohibition. The stone covered building reminded me of a country chapel which was surrounded by a well-maintained garden. To the right of the building was a large lawn which was surrounded by tall trees providing a nice shady picnic area.

As we entered, we noticed how busy the place was. We managed to squeeze ourselves a spot at the bar and were quickly introduced to the tasting available that day. Though their Fumé Blanc and a collection of Zinfandels are well-known and, which I wanted to check out, our host quickly reminded us that they also produce wonderful Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Meritage. After paying our \$10 tasting fee, we decided to try their limited release wines list. Most of their wines are reasonably priced between \$18 and \$40.

The 2014 Fumé Blanc was of a Sauvignon Blanc wine style. Lemon-lime citrus aromas, the palate was definitively of Meyer lemon with a twist of lime. With a grassy character and mineral edge, this wine was intense with a lingering finish. Pairing this with oysters would be perfect, I thought. Rinsing our palate with water, we then attacked an impressive collection of great zinfandels. My favorite came down to those three Dry Creek Valley wines.

**2013 Beeson Ranch** offered berries and cardamom aromas to the nose. The palate brought more of the raspberry and blackberry fruit flavors with a white pepper tickling the tongue. With a peppery lingering finish, good tannin, this is quite an interesting and elegant wine.

**2013 Somers Ranch** offered raspberry and slightly rose petal to the nose. To my surprise, the palate reminded me of eating a berry pie though. Well-balanced with fleshy tannin, this wine revealed a hint of dark chocolate on the finish. Definitely going onto my wine list to purchase.

**DCV2 Estate – Four Clones** offered raspberry and cherry aromas. The palate confirmed those aromas plus dark berries, spices tones and licorice. With a good balance between the alcohol, tannin and acidity level; this wine was quite something. Ready to purchase a bottle, I was disappointed to find out it was sold out.

Do visit Dry Creek Winery, if you are in the area. <http://www.drycreekvineyard.com>



## Sonoma: Various Wineries Worth Visiting!



The next few wineries were nice to visit, but not to our likes to consider purchasing any wines. That said, do consider checking them online or visit them yourself, as they might be to your likes. Kunde Winery, Landmark, Matanzas (nice lavender farm with products for sell too), MacRostie, Martinelli, Rochioli and Portalupi. Also, two other properties worth visiting are

1. Korbel for its beautiful property. Not to forget, their amazing variety of sparklings which I never knew about until we visited. Many of them are only available at the property. Make sure you had lunch first, as they really serve you a lot and it can get to you on an empty stomach. No reservation needed for tasting and it is free. Check out for their great tours at [www.korbel.com](http://www.korbel.com)



2. Benziger Winery, a gorgeous property and historic buildings. Not to forget, the best tour in the area and absolutely gorgeous vineyard grounds. Reservation a must. Go to [www.benziger.com](http://www.benziger.com)

## Sonoma: Thomas George Estates



We did not have Thomas George Estates on our program, but could not resist the beautiful entrance and garden that we saw from the road. As we drove up to a short hill, we reached the beautiful old winery building. A sign indicated to go to the cave across the street.

Carved in the rocky mountain, this cave reminded me of those I have seen in Europe. Old tools, machinery and wooden furniture attractively decorated it. To our left was a gorgeous long wooden dining table which is used for hosting private food and wine pairing events. We finally reached the bar where a young lady, visibly feeling cold, welcomed us. Being the only one there, we took our times to enjoy their tasting selections of the day. Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Grenache were real nice. At \$35 to \$60 a bottle, we decided to pass on them and headed out to have lunch in their small picnic area. The large trees provided a great shady area for comfortable picnic tables. We enjoyed the quiet of the area and its beauty.

I would definitely consider coming back for one of their “food and wine pairing” dinner though. The décor makes it quite a romantic environment. I invite you to visit their location. Consult their website for the various wines they have available right now. Go to [www.thomasgeorgeestates.com](http://www.thomasgeorgeestates.com)

## Sonoma: Harford Winery



Considering the Wine Spectator reviews, I was really looking forward to our next stop. Harford Family Winery was founded in 1994 and had since then established quite a name. As we entered the owner's beautiful home, we were welcome by two friendly ladies. Our \$15 tasting fee paid, we reviewed our choices. From the Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel, late Releases and specialty wines; all I can say is BRAVO!

From the oaked fruity Chardonnay to the suppled, well-balanced and aging capabilities of their Zinfandels; I lingered at the bar filled with joy. Most of their wines were in the higher price range (\$48 to \$80), but their unique personalities and distinctive qualities are worth every dime to me. Sure, it is not your everyday wines; but for a wonderful gift or when a special meal calls for an exquisite bottle, I will be looking for one of those delightful Harford wines.

Among my favorites were

- 2013 Three Jacks Vineyard Chardonnay (\$65). This wine had wonderful pear, pineapple and citrus flavors. With its medium oaked body, delicate aromas and good acidity, this well-balanced Chardonnay can be enjoyed now or within the next three years.
- 2013 Muldune Trail Pinot Noir (\$70). This wine had cherry flavors with cedar and woody tones. With a hint of spicyness at the end, this well-balanced wine is a good Pinot Noir. That said, at that higher price range, I may look for a Burgundy instead.

- 2013 Seascape Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$70). This earthy wine had black berries and plum flavors with a finish that reminds me of Asian spices. With its full-bodied and well-balanced structure, this would be best kept for another year or two before drinking. A fabulous wine that can be compared to the world-known and great Bourgogne Côte de Nuits.

- 2013 Highwire Vineyard Zinfandel (\$55). This wine had blackberry, boysenberry, blackcurrant and kirsch aromas that was confirmed once en-bouche. With its peppery and unsmoked cigar tobacco notes, the dark chocolate and long finish of this full-bodied wine makes you want more. I believe this well-balanced zinfandel could benefit even more from another year or two in a cellar.

- 2013 Jolene Vineyard Zinfandel (\$55). This wine had dark cherry and plum aromas. Darker refreshing tones are reveal en-bouche and so were violet and slightly smoky scents. With its bright acidity and tannin, this wine is drinkable now.

- 2013 Dina's Vineyard Zinfandel (\$55). This wine had pronounced dark berries aromas. Once en-bouche, blackberry and blueberry prevail, while a hint of anise scent brought some interesting freshness to the wine. With good acidity and tannic structures, this well-balanced wine lingers with a warm velvety and silky finish. Definitely my favorite of all the series we tried!

With our zinfandel loaded in the car, we headed back to our resort. We will visit again, not to mention keep track of their amazing wines. I highly recommend this place. Check their website at <http://www.hartfordwines.com>

## Salt Can Sneak On You!



So you think you are controlling your salt intake by avoiding the shaker at the table. Think again, as the shaker is not quite the culprit. In fact, research shows that the shaker represents an average of 10% of people' daily salt intake while 77% of consumption is actually coming from processed foods. The rest is from a pinch here and a pinch there!

According to the USDA, Americans consume an average of 3000 to 4000 milligrams of sodium per day which is too much. Though a certain amount of salt is a necessity for our body to function well; too much contributes to bloating, weight gain, high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, vascular diseases, osteoporosis, stomach cancer, kidney disease and even headaches. Regulated in the body by your kidneys, sodium helps controlling your body's fluid balance and the good function of nerves and muscles. So how much is healthy?

After researching the latest news on the subject, I was surprised to find out that the recommended daily intake varied from one organization to another. By example the USDA recommended less than 2300 mg (1 tsp. or 6g) per day for adults while the American Heart Association suggested 1500 mg (about 2/3 tsp. or about 4g.) per day and the Diabetes Association somewhere in between those two numbers. Confused, I decided to check what the Institute of Medicine in France had to say. They recommended 5g per day which was close to what the AHA recommended. We must keep in mind though, that this is a general guideline for most healthy individuals and, that it does not take into consideration any health issues one may have. So, by all means, check with your doctor or nutritionist for your personal recommended allowance.

Reducing and substituting salt on daily basis can make a huge difference in one's health. Knowing how to do it while still being able to enjoy the pleasure of the table is easier than most think. Here are some important facts and suggestions:

1. Avoid processed foods and cook from fresh ingredients as much as possible, organic preferably.
2. When purchasing processed foods is inevitable, check carefully foods labels. Choose no salt added, sodium-free, light or low-sodium. That said, keep in mind that sodium-free main ingredient is potassium chloride with no sodium and can be harmful to some. Light or low-sodium (140 mg or less) contain a mix of sodium chloride and potassium chloride. Check with your doctor or nutritionist if you can use any of these types of salt substitutes.
3. Limit the use of salt as much as possible. Unless you are curing meat or fish, there is no need to use an abundance of salt. A touch will do and compensate for less salt using flavorful ingredients (garlic, lemon juice, flavorful vinegar, spices and herbs). Also don't forget to reduce sauces a bit, so the flavors become more concentrated. Use dry herbs for long cooking. Use fresh herbs to finish a dish. Nothing like aromatic freshly ground pepper(s) to finish a dish too.
4. When cooking with or without processed food (such as with stock or tomato can), avoid salting at the beginning. Check at the end of cooking, once you have fully developed the flavors of the dish, decide if you need a pinch of salt or not. Once you get used to less sodium, chances are that you will find that you don't need to add any.
5. When eating out; look for foods that are the least processed. For example, order steamed vegetables with lemon/lime wedges or vinegar. Choose grilled foods and ask for no salt be added, if possible. Ask for oil and vinegar for your salad dressing. Stay away from the shaker and use the pepper mill instead, if not too spicy already. And remember, stay away from salt before or after you enjoy a meal out, since 77% of sodium consumed in the US come from processed food and restaurant meals.

5. Awareness is key to keep salt intake close to your recommended daily allowance. Pay attention to how much you salt your foods and remember these numbers:

A large pinch of salt is almost 1 g = 383 mg sodium

1/4 tsp. salt or 1.5g= 575 mg sodium

1/2 tsp. salt or 3g = 1,150 mg sodium

3/4 tsp. salt or 4.5 g = 1,725 mg sodium

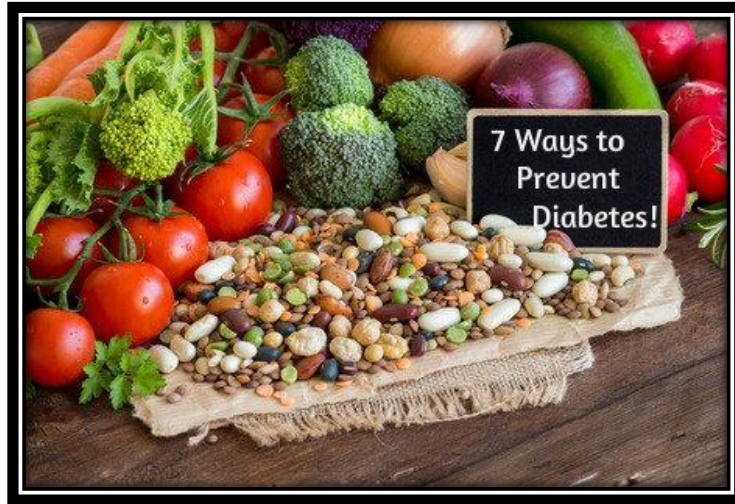
1 tsp. salt or 6g = 2,300 mg sodium

A few pinches here and there will get you quickly to that number!

7. Finally, know that your taste buds will get used to less sodium within a few days, so be patient and remember you are doing this for your health!



## Lowering Your Risk of Developing Type 2 Diabetes



Did you know that 2 out of 3 American adults are overweight or obese?

Did you know that 1 in 3 American adults have high blood pressure?

Did you know that 1 in 4 American adults are prediabetes?

Sadly, every year, almost 1 million deaths are attributed to diabetes and heart disease.

If your doctor told you that you are prediabetes, your blood glucose levels are probably higher than normal. You may also be overweight, have high blood pressure and high cholesterol. If so, you are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, heart attack, stroke, nerve damage, kidney failure, eye problems and early death.

Side note here. If you develop type 2 diabetes, know that you will need to be carefully monitored by a doctor and a registered dietitian. It will be primordial to maintain proper targeted sugar levels that they will determine for you. They also must monitor you carefully to perfectly coordinate 5 critical aspects of your life: what you should eat, how much you should eat, when you should eat, how much exercise you should do and how much insulin and other medications you should take. It is a very precise science that is based on every individual, no one is the same. I have lived this experience, as I helped my father dealing with such health issues over the last four years. He only became well again, once all became under study control!

As prediabetes, the good news is that you can prevent or delay developing diabetes and other diseases. You can improve your health by simply engaging in regular exercise, eating a healthy diet and embracing a healthy lifestyle. Not to be overlooked is possibly losing weight and taking prescribed medications.

So here are my "7" ways to lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes:

- Consult your doctor and ask if you should see a registered dietitian to establish a healthy diet

- Engage in a sport to exercise regularly or walk at least 1 to 1.5 hour every day
- Do strength training (lifting weight) 3 times a week
- Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night
- Quit smoking, if you do
- Practice relaxation techniques on daily basis (meditation, yoga or whatever works for you)
- Learn to prepare and cook healthier meals (see the [Personal Fitness Chef Program](#)) while embracing a Mediterranean Diet (see my book [Cooking Well: Mediterranean](#))

If you need a coach or support in your effort to regain or maintain your health, please feel free to contact me through my [Coaching Realm site!](#)



## My Shopping List For Thanksgiving



This is a sample of my "Shopping List" for Thanksgiving. Copy it to your computer and adjust it to your needs. Once done, you will save time on the next time around!

### **PRODUCE**

Fresh Cranberries  
Potatoes  
Sweet potatoes or yams  
Greens beans  
Mushrooms  
Lettuce  
Tomatoes  
Yellow Onions  
1 small red onion (salad)  
Carrots  
Celery  
Avocado  
Corn  
Garlic  
Shallots  
Lemons  
Oranges  
Apples  
Herbs

### **MORE GROCERY ITEMS**

Cornbread mix

Bread loaves for stuffing  
Turkey stock (3 x 24 ounces)  
Dried berries mix (3 cups)  
Grapeseed oil  
Olive oil  
Cornstarch  
Flour  
Sugar (Turbinado, sucanat or brown and maple syrup)  
Vanilla extract  
Eggs  
Low-fat milk  
Butter (for pies)  
Cheese and crackers + a couple of appetizers  
Nuts (hazelnuts, almonds, walnuts, pecans)  
Pumpkin can (for pie) and see other ingredients needed on can  
Pumpkin Pie Spice  
Cinnamon  
Dark chocolate (75%)  
Marshmallows  
Apricot glaze or preserves for apple pie  
Blackcurrant preserves  
Vanilla extract

Diswasher soap  
Hand soap  
Toilet paper  
Paper towels and napkins  
Aromatic candle for bathroom  
Flowers/Centerpiece for table

## **DRINKS**

Water (plain and sparkling)  
Apple, Berry or Pomegranate Spritzers  
Champagne  
Wines  
Tea, coffee

## Diet and Fitness Craze



As always during the beginning of a year, the wild and crazy diet advertisements appear. This is not new, there have been many unrealistic offers over decades and it is probably not going to go away soon. The ones that always gets me are those promising huge amount of weight loss in very little time. Let's talk about the one I just saw this morning: 17 lbs. weight loss in 30 days. Let me show you why this is unrealistic and marketing BS!

For most people, the general healthy guideline of daily calories intake is about  
1500-1600 calories per day for women  
2000-2100 calories per day for men  
Of course, those numbers will vary based on lifestyle, level of activity, exercise and whether one is trying to lose weight or gain weight.

To lose 1 lb. of fat, one needs to burn 3500 calories. To do so, one can reduce food intake and/or increase calorie burning through exercise. The healthier way is the combination of the two. But let's just assume a minute that we are looking at reducing only food intake. To safely lose weight, one must reduce calorie intake by about 300 to maximum 500 calories per day. (500 x 7 days = 3500 calories per week). Going beyond the 500 calories a day can result in serious health issues from dehydration to nutrients deficiencies and loss of muscle mass rather than fat.

The maximum rate that the body can lose fat is around 1% of body mass a week. So, if a female weighs 130 lbs., she can expect to lose 1.3 lb. per week, if she reduces her caloric intake by 500 calories a day or 3500 calories per week.

If we consider the 17 lbs. in 30 days, the numbers work like this:  
17 lbs. x 3500 calories = 59,500 calories in 30 days  
59,500 :30 days = 1,983 calories a day  
1,983 x 7 days = 13,881 calories per week.

As you can see, 17 lbs. in 30 days is totally unrealistic. You could not exercise enough either to make up for those calories without passing out. Seriously, such extreme weight loss is not just ridiculous, it is insane and dangerous. Hopefully, it is nothing more than a marketing gimmick!

Marie-Annick (also known as Chef Marie or Coach Marie): Your health, diet, fitness and wellness coach who supports reasonable weight loss!

Feel free to contact me for your health and wellness coaching needs and check my numerous [Cooking Well Healthy Cookbooks](#).

WISHING YOU A HEALTHY AND HAPPY 2017!

## 2017 Winter Fancy Food Show



With more consumers demanding transparency and healthier alternatives; the specialty food and beverage industries are showing serious trends towards better, more natural and higher quality products.

With over 1400 exhibitors, many products seemed to have been redesigned to meet the latest health craze of this country. Fewer new products seemed to have surfaced at the show this year.

With less sodium and sugar in most products; herbs, spices and exotic seasonings are adding new dimension to many products. Hemp seed powder and grains are used to increase protein content in many prepared foods. Low-glycemic, lactose-free and gluten-free products have seen a steady growth in 2016 and demands are expected to continue to grow in 2017. Sticky rice, super grain bars, flavored seaweeds and vegetables based snacks are on the rise.

With the increase interest in the Mediterranean diet; pulses (beans, lentils, chickpeas), marinades, pilafs, grass-fed meats, fish, organic dairies (particularly goat) and dark chocolate are in high demand.

Indian and Asian sauces are also showing high consumer interest, as they facilitate preparing quick exotic meals at home. Coconut water, milk and other products are slightly slowing down, but still considered in demand.

Cauliflower, used as a protein source, is considered trendy. Microwavable cauliflower rice and cauliflower based snacks are among the new products that attracted my attention.

Kale appeal is on the decline, while a variety of greens are on the rise. Among them are Arugula, Bibb, Butterhead, Chard, Mache, Romaine, Spinach and Purslane which is high in Omega-3.

Colorful Mochi ice creams, natural fruit bars, and homemade style ice creams continue to be popular in the world of frozen treats.

Manufacturers of detoxing and relaxing drinks continues to pursue a variety of teas. Citrus, pear, apple cider, onion, ginger, garlic, Asian mushrooms, turmeric, peppercorn and pepper are omnipresent in many products. Matcha is not just for tea anymore, new flavored snacks attracted show attendants. Organic coffees are going strong and demand is expected to continue to grow.

We shall finish with quite an impressive international presence. It was hard to resist the delicious old-world cheeses, cured meats, sausages and goodies. In growing demand, especially around the holidays, are sweets and desserts. Among them are: Crepes, Macarons, individual Tarts and St. Michel Buttery Madeleines or Galettes (France) - Cookies, Cannoli, Pistachio & Hazelnut Nut Mousse and Marrons/Fruits Glacés (Italy) – Churros, Crema Catalana and Cookies (Spain) – Baklavas, Olive Oil Cake and Almond Cookies (Greece) – Cardamom Buns, Chocolate Balls and Rye Cookies (Sweden) – Marzipan Candies (Germany and Denmark) - Shortbreads, Puddings and Mini Tarts (Scotland).  
Jan 2017

## **San Francisco Grand Hyatt**

Hotel Review by Chef Marie-Annick Courtier

February 2, 2017

While attending the Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco mid-January, we had the privilege to stay at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. The tall luxury building hotel staff welcomed us with friendly faces and style. The doormen reached our taxi doors and immediately took charge of our suitcases. Meanwhile another doorman guided us through the entrance and directed us to the registration office. Within minutes we were in our room.

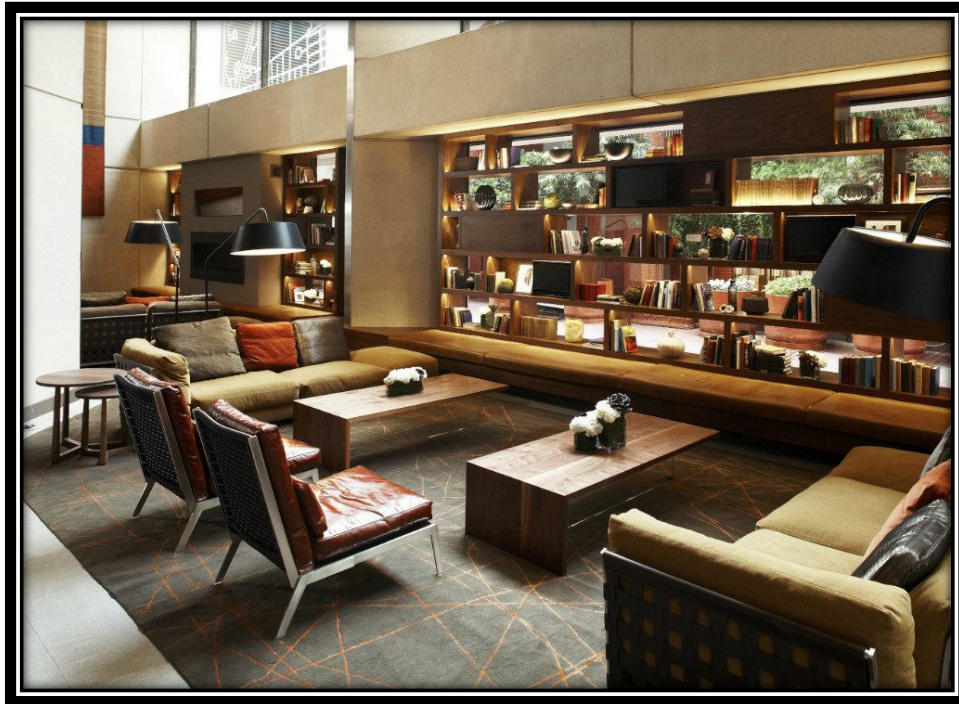
Located on Union Square and a few minutes from downtown Financial District, it is an ideal location for tourists, world-class shopping, and for people attending an event at the nearby Moscone Center. From San Francisco airport, the BART system (\$10) or a taxi (\$40) will get you there in half an hour or less. Within walking distance from the hotel; the trams, buses or regional rail services transport crowd to various tourist destinations from Chinatown to Fisherman's Wharf, Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz Island, Nob Hill, Lombard Street, Presidio, Japanese Tea Garden and many museums.



The front lobby featured three servicing areas and a snack section where fruits and flavored water were always available. On the back side was the quiet library style lounge area, a perfect location to meet visitors. Near the back door, facing Union Square, was the concierge area. Well-trained employees are there to offer any assistance needed. Elizabeth Baca-Pryfogle, a



knowledgeable and professional concierge, provided us with great insights on the city and met our every need during our week stay. Following one of her recommendations, our fondest experience was visiting “Disney Museum” in the Presidio. It was a fascinating historic place in a beautiful environment overlooking the San Francisco Bay Bridge.

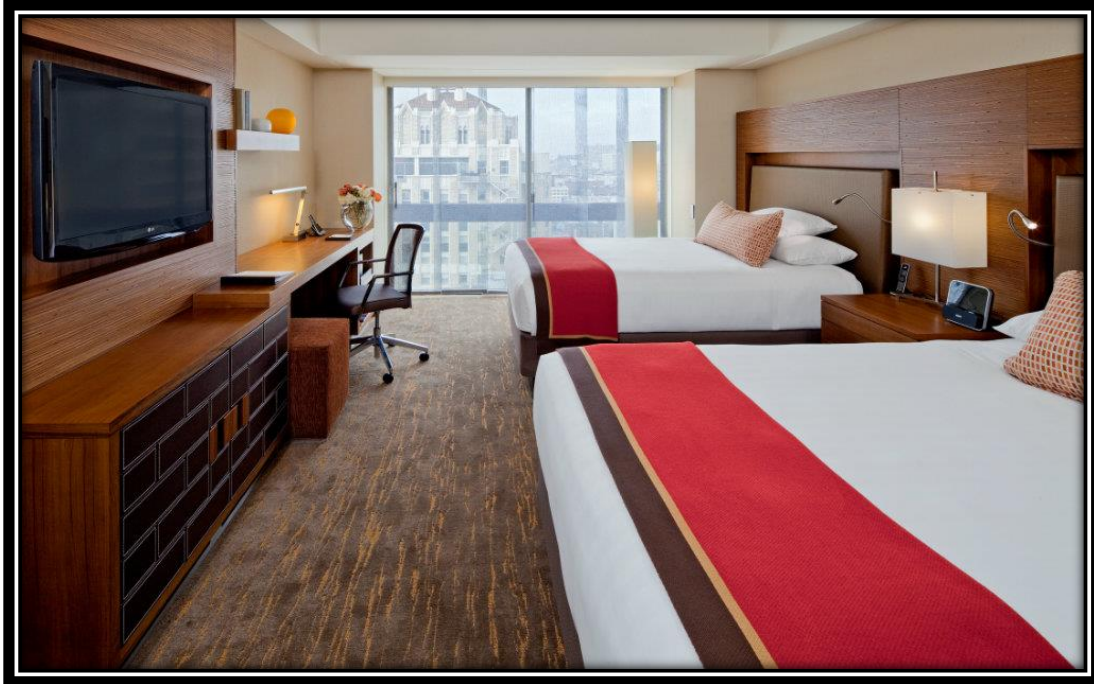


The 660 contemporary guestrooms and suites offer amazing views from the city and San Francisco Bay. Six panoramic view event rooms are also available for private parties, conferences or business meetings. The Grand Club on 32nd. floor offered stunning panoramic view of San Francisco Bay and landmarks.

Our room was spacious and provided modern conveniences from desk area to complimentary Wi-Fi, mural television, enhanced video streaming capabilities from mobile devices or tablets, electrical window covering, fire alarm system, emergency strobe light, smoke detector, personal thermostat control, entryway latch with door peephole, coffee maker, refrigerator and personal code safe. Extra pillows and blanquettes were neatly stocked in the closet.

The clean bathroom was reasonably sized, with bathtub shower. Plenty of towels, hooks, shelves, soaps, lotions and shampoos were available. Resting on a bottom shelf, a black bag holding a hair dryer was a wonderful touch for us travelers. Maid service was friendly and excellent.





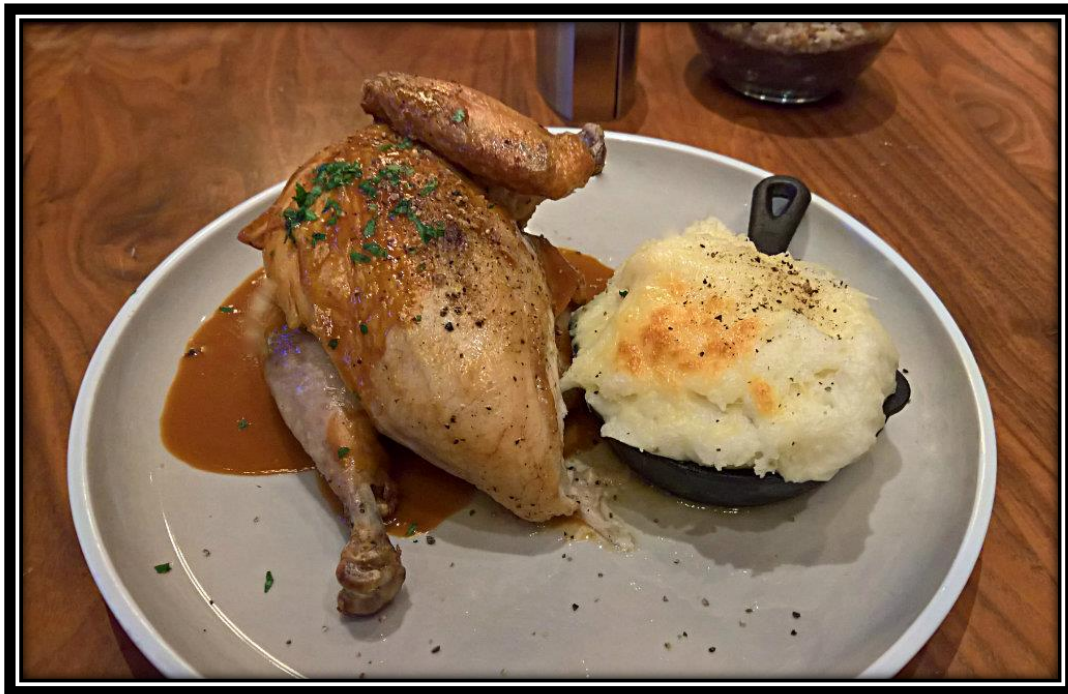
OneUp Restaurant and Lounge offered a warm and comfortable atmosphere where wine, cocktails and bistro style cuisine were enjoyed. Maître d 'Hotel, bartenders and servers were very friendly, quite eager to accommodate our needs. The acoustic was perfect, as no noise transpired from the open kitchen environment. The restaurant menu was attractive, portion sizes under control, and the food perfectly prepared. During dinner hours, white tablecloths contributed to a more luxuriant atmosphere. We were informed that live music performance can be enjoyed on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.



The breakfast selection was excellent, and the menu would satisfy most appetite. One can feast on various Eggs' Preparations, Smoked Salmon with Bagel, Cardamom French Toast, Oatmeal, Granola with Yogurt, Pancakes, Waffles, Croissants, Breads, Fruit Plates, Juices, Tea or Coffee. The lunch menu offered an array of Fish and Seafood Salads, Soup of the Day, San Francisco Style Chowders and Sandwiches.

Dinner menu reflected some of the lunch menu items with the addition of the delicious Chicken Pot Pie, Short Ribs, Pork Tenderloin, Teriyaki Salmon, Seafood Baked Dishes and various Flat-Breads. We personally enjoyed their "Crab and Shrimp Louie Salad" and "Organic Rosemary Roasted Chicken" served with Mash Potatoes Au Gratin".

The dessert menu was very limited, particularly when two out of the four choices were sold out. A locally crafted cheese platter was also available which was the perfect pairing for a happy hour with a couple of wine glasses.

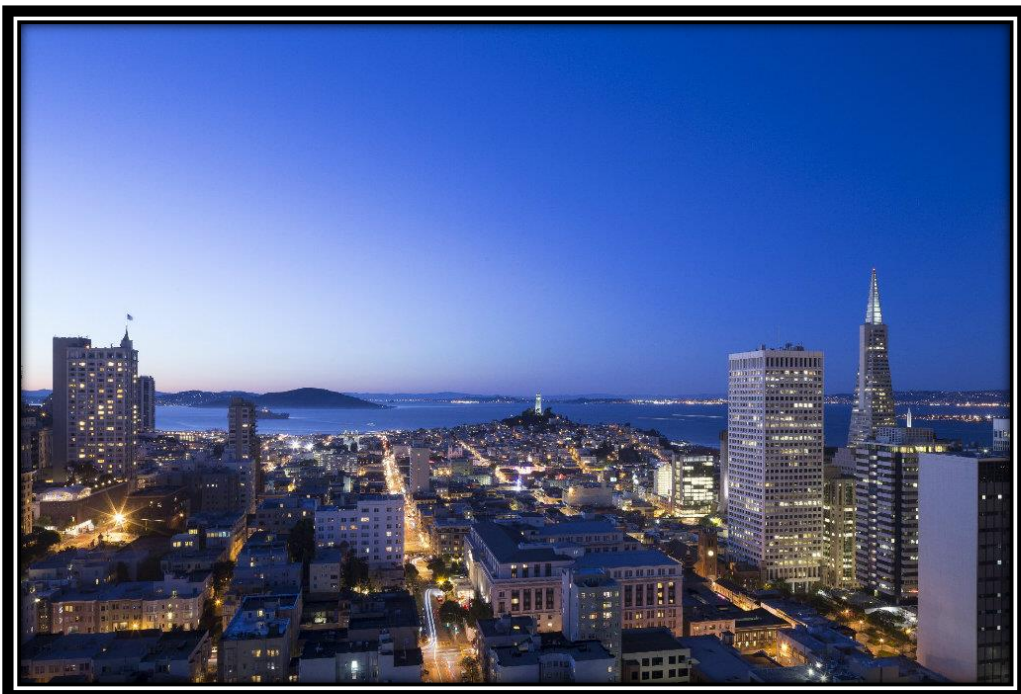


Room Service was very professional, and breakfast was always delivered on time. The selection matched the restaurant breakfast and lunch menus, slightly shorter lists though. Dinner menu was very limited. That said, one can be down to the restaurant within two minutes. We never had to make reservation, nor did we had to wait to be seated for dinner. With a celebratory touch in mind, management surprised us with delicious chocolate treats and Champagne delivered to our room in the early evening.





Hotel room prices can range between \$198 (regular room) and around \$300 (luxury suite) per night throughout the year. Through the hotel chain, loyalty rates are also available. Special offers can be found online at various time of year. Valet parking was \$65 per day, which reflected the general high cost of parking downtown San Francisco these days.



Overhaul, we really enjoyed our stay at the Grand Hyatt hotel. The professional and friendly staff was always willing to assist us at a moment's notice. We felt pampered and a memorable experience was delivered with class. Our expectations were surprisingly surpassed. We will happily stay here again upon our next visit to San Francisco.

Chef Marie Rating 4 stars/5

\*Some photos used in this article were provided by the Grand Hyatt Hotel Management.  
Food Photography by Chef Marie – January 2017.

## **A Healthy Snack Attack!**



By Marie-Annick Courtier, your Healthy Lifestyle Coach  
March 02, 2017

Many of my clients have asked me to give them ideas for preparing healthy snacks from home. I have been told that they are either tired of the same thing, need to stay away from the high sugary grocery pre-packaged snacks, or want to learn shortcuts to quickly prepare healthy snacks for their family.

Most told me that they wish to be close to 150 calories for their snacks. Though such number is reasonable, know that such amount may vary based on how daily calories allowance are spread throughout the day, specific physical activity and personal needs. As I have always done with my clients, before exploring the preparation of snacks; we explore the difference between "snacking and snack", as it affects our health and weight. I will share with you what I heard from many.

To some people, snacking is eating out of control, with or without awareness of quantity, with or without a sense of satisfaction and pleasure. It is often caused by emotional distress and done, at any time, with or without friends and family members around. Guilt may or may not be involved.

Snacking is a bad habit that often lead to health and weight issues. Ask yourself, do you "snack" or indulge in "snacking" on various occasions throughout the day? If you do, I suggest you start thinking about it. Becoming aware of it is the first step towards healthier behaviors. Do some soul search, understand the causes of your snacking, and emotions attached to it. Eventually, you will see clearly what is happening. Then you will be ready to put in place strategies that will help you overcome such unhealthy snacking habits. Yes, a little discipline can go a long way for most people!

To some people, a snack is an occasional gourmandise or small treat which is often associated with pleasure. To others, it is a specific amount of food to control blood sugar levels or a reasonable amount of food to satisfy the awareness of hunger. Pleasure may or may not be involved.

Though there is nothing wrong with a special treat on occasion, one must be aware of such habit to avoid indulgence. The purpose of a snack is to replenish the body with appropriate nutrients, so it can continue to thrive. It can be a scheduled and controlled amount of food to maintain the right blood sugar levels. A healthy snack can assist in the regulation of appetite throughout a day. It should be, reasonably, a pleasant experience that emphasizes eating healthy flavorful ingredients. There is no need to feel guilty about it, as long as it is part of daily calories allowance that serves the right purpose.

What is really a healthy snack? Well, it is one that provide the right amount of essential nutrients, supplies energy to the body, and brings on a general sense of well-being. It is one that takes into consideration all the foods that maybe consumed during a day, so a diet stays properly balanced. You may consider the following elements for creating a healthy snack:

1. **Proteins**, good sources of energy and the major building material for all body tissues. They also produce enzymes and hormones which regulate the body's functions. Examples: Legumes, beans, nuts, lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs and dairies.
2. **Complex Carbohydrates**, good sources of energy and necessary for the proper use of fats in the body. Examples: Whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables.
3. **Healthy Fats**, good sources of energy, supply essential fatty acids, carry fat-soluble vitamins and are indispensable part of every cell in the body. They also are excellent lubricant for the joints, help reduce inflammation, have a positive effect on sugar blood levels and, even influence the amount of fat stored by the body. Examples: Olive oil, canola oil, grape seed oil, fish oil, flax seed oil, avocado oil or walnut oil.
3. **Vitamins**, which are chemical compounds that help regulate the body's functions and fight infectious diseases. Pretty much found in an array of foods from fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry, fish, eggs, legumes, leafy greens, fruits, whole grains, dairies, nuts and so on.
4. **Minerals**, which play an important role in the metabolic process of the body. Found in an array of foods from meats, poultry, fish, eggs, vegetables, leafy greens, fruits, nuts, whole grains and so on.
5. **Fibers**, which are important for the proper functioning of the digestive system. May reduce cholesterol, prevent cancers and help maintaining the proper blood sugar levels. Found oats, beans, lentils, peas, fruits, vegetables, cereals, brown rice and wheat pasta or breads.

6. **Water**, which is indispensable for the good functioning of the body. It regulates the body temperature, assists in the digestive process and transports nutrients and waste. Most food contain certain levels of water. Best source for hydration is, without a doubt, water!



Now that we determined some of the recommended ingredients of a healthy snack, let us explore some examples. Here is a list of quick easy snacks to prepare. Just as I would recommend to my clients, I suggest you establish a 3-weeks rotation system. Make a priority to meet your daily nutritional needs, while still enjoying some of your favorite healthy snacks. Feel free to mix, reorganize the list, and add your family favorites as well. Having a prepared list reduces the chances of getting bored with food. It also facilitates shopping and may help controlling food costs. Now to the samples list!

- An apple with a few walnuts and raisins.
- 1/2 cup yogurt (regular or low-fat) with 1 Tbsp. almonds and sprinkle some homemade (no sugar or low-sugar) granola on top.
- 1/2 cup yogurt (regular or low-fat) with slices of mango and sprinkled almonds.
- 1/2 cup yogurt (regular or low-fat) with 1/4 cup pumpkin puree, a drop of vanilla extract, pinch of pumpkin spices or cinnamon and drizzled with maple syrup(option).
- 1/2 cup cottage cheese (regular or low-fat) with 2 Tbsp. walnuts.
- 1/3 cup cottage cheese (regular or low-fat) with ¼ cup berries and 1 Tbsp. slivered almonds.
- 1 slice of whole wheat bread (toasted or not) topped with shredded dark chocolate mixed in a tablespoon of cream cheese thin out with a little milk. You can also add blueberries.
- 1/3 cup oatmeal with hot milk or soy milk (regular or low-fat), 2 tbsp. dry fruits (berries, raisins, apricots, mango, etc.) and 1 tablespoon flax seeds.



- Fruit shake with fresh berries, banana and nuts (optional). You may add milk or soy milk (regular or low-fat).
- Gazpacho (with an optional small amount of regular/low-fat milk or soy milk).
- Carrot and red/yellow bell peppers sticks rolled in chicken/turkey slices and a little mustard.
- An apple with 1 Tbsp. almond butter.
- Apple with cinnamon flavored yogurt and 1 Tbsp. walnuts.
- Cooked apple slices or chunks, 1 Tbsp. pistachios and orange zest.
- Thick round apple slice, top with an orange slice, a thin coat mascarpone and sprinkled almonds.
- 1/2 cup Edamame with 1 Tbsp. tapenade.
- 1/2 pear filled with fromage blanc or thick Greek yogurt and topped with a few blueberries or raspberries.
- 1 to 2 grilled pineapple slices (depends on thickness), topped with 1 Tbsp. sliced almonds and shredded coconut.
- 1 Star fruit with a few nuts.
- Waldorf salad made with apple, celery root, pineapple, walnut, lemon juice, and low-fat canola based mayonnaise or yogurt.
- Homemade Rice cake or Popcorn (plain or with grape seed rather than butter).
- 1/2 cup red grapes with 1 Tbsp. walnuts, pistachios or almonds.
- 1 slice of walnut or wheat or whole grain bread, a thin coat of low-fat cream cheese and 2 tsp. chopped walnuts.
- Homemade applesauce plus 1 slice of walnut bread (optional).
- Homemade rice or tapioca pudding.



- Exotic fruit salad.
- 10 raw carrots or cherry tomatoes with 2 Tbsp. hummus or bean paste or crushed avocado (with lemon juice).
- 1 slice toasted wheat bread, a thin coat of Fromage blanc or thick Greek yogurt, and shredded dark chocolate.
- Celery sticks with peanut butter, chicken or tuna salad.
- A thin slice of bread, cucumber slice, smoked trout or salmon, dash of sour cream.
- Pumpernickel or rye bread with a thin coating of herb cream cheese, topped with smoked salmon.
- Radishes with yogurt flavored with salad herbs.
- Radishes with cream cheese mixed with shredded carrots, hazelnuts, and lemon juice.
- Vegetables with yogurt flavored with horseradish.
- Vegetables with tapenade or pesto or mashed avocado flavored with curry or anchovy flavored cream cheese.
- Yellow and orange vegetables with pureed cooked spinach or collard greens mixed in yogurt.
- 6 cherry tomatoes filled with mashed avocados and lemon juice.
- Mini-fruit brochettes (can be drizzle with dark chocolate).
- Popsicle made from fresh fruit juices such as grape juice, orange juice, citrus juice, watermelon, melon, strawberry-kiwi, berries, or pomegranate.



- Crepe filled with freshly sliced fruits drizzled with melted dark chocolate.
- 1 Crepe filled with preserves and fresh fruits.
- 1 crepe filled with a thin coat of homemade Nutella and fruits.
- 1 Crepe or wrap filled with cheese, spinach and thin tomato slices.
- 1 small banana sliced topped with a few small chocolate chips and nuts pieces.
- Salmon or Turkey Jerky wrapped with greens and vegetables.
- 2 small round toasted bread slices topped with Vache Qui Rit, strawberry slices and blueberries.
- 1 hardboiled egg with roasted tomatoes and greens.
- 1 Tbsp. nut butter over a couple of celery branches.
- 1 wheat bread slice with 2 tsp. nut butter and 1 tsp. grape jam.
- 1 slice of your favorite bread topped with 4 avocado slices, feta and pomegranate seeds.
- A couple of apricots or figs cut in half, sandwiched with some goat cheese or feta and sprinkled chopped almonds.
- Cereals mix with a serving milk carton.

Here are now some of my clients' favorite recipes:



### **Berries, currant jam and Plain Greek Yogurt**

*1 Tbsp. red currant jam, 1/3 cup plain regular or low-fat yogurt, 1/4 cup berries, mint for decor*  
Spread red currant jam on bottom of a glass. Top with yogurt, berries and decor with mint.

### **Strawberries, Chocolate Chips and Yogurt (1 serving)**

*2 tsp. slivered almonds, 1/3 cup regular or low-fat plain yogurt, 1/4 cup strawberries, 1 tbsp. chocolate chips*

*Mix the yogurt with the flax seeds. Add the strawberries and sprinkled the almonds. You may substitute berries for the strawberries.*

### **Fruity Couscous (6 servings)**

*3/4 cup whole wheat couscous, 1/4 cup shredded carrots, 1/2 tsp. coriander, 1/2 tsp. cinnamon, 1/2 cup orange juice, 1/4 cup lemon juice, 4 apricots, diced, 1 mango, diced, 1 tsp. honey, 2 tsp. olive oil, mint to taste*

*In a saucepan, combine orange juice, lemon juice, honey, olive oil, and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and add the couscous. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork and let cool completely. Place the couscous in a serving bowl. Top with diced apricots, mango, and sprinkle minced mint to taste. Refrigerate and serve very cold.*

### **Chocolate Banana (4 servings)**

*4 small bananas, peeled, 2 cups your favorite dark chocolate, 1 cup crushed walnuts, almonds, or pistachios (or any combination), 4 sticks*

*Insert one stick in each banana. Melt the dark chocolate in the microwave. Dip the banana in the melted chocolate and then into the crushed nuts. Enjoy immediately or freeze for a frozen treat.*

### **Herrings Tartar (6 servings)**

*6 oz. red or white potato, 4 oz. herrings (jar), 4 radishes, 4 oz. apples, 1 Tbsp. salad herbs, 1 Tbsp. apple vinegar, Pepper to taste, Lettuce leaves*

*Place the potato in a pan and cover with water. Add a pinch of salt and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer until cooked through. Remove the potato from the water, cool, and peel. Dice the potato, herrings, radishes, and apples. Mix the apple vinegar with a little oil from the herrings jar, add the salad herbs, and season to taste with pepper. Pour over the tartar and mix well. Refrigerate for later use. Serve cold over lettuce leaves.*

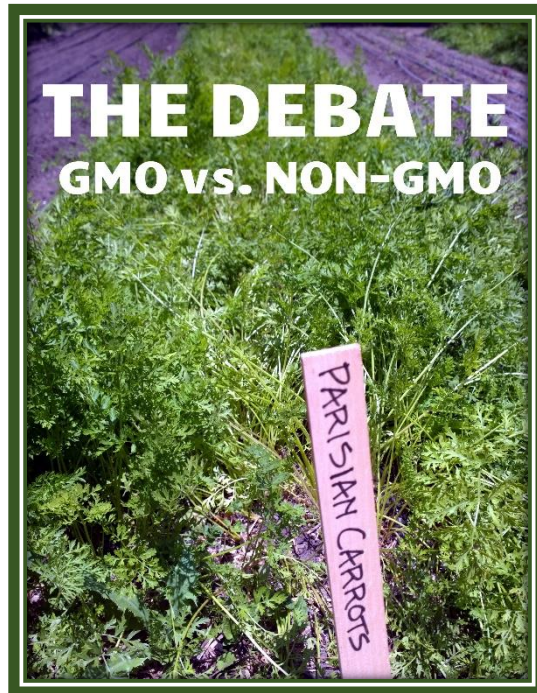
*Option: For hors-d'oeuvres use Phyllo Dough cups. You can also substitute sardines for herrings. You can also add a little mustard to the vinaigrette. You can also tightly wrap the tartar into lettuce leaves and then into rice paper spring roll wrappers.*

Here is "Chef Marie" final tip!

When you are battling against one of those "snack attack" and, you know you should not eat; drink a glass of water or a cup tea (no sugar added). You can also chew on sugar-less gum, a mint or a licorice root chew stick. Licorice root last a long time and has very few calories.

Marie-Annick Courtier (also known as Chef Marie or Coach Marie), is the author of numerous healthy cookbooks and educational programs. Please see her [STORE](#) for more information. For your coaching needs, feel free to check her [coaching realm site](#) or contact her at 949-246-7781.

## The debate: GMO vs. NON-GMO



By Chef Marie-Annick Courtier – March 21, 2017

Lately, many people have inquired about the safety of GMO foods to me. Considering the massive information, including misinformation, I must say that I was overwhelmed by the endless material. I certainly understand the confusion many feel these days. I will briefly attempt to give you some of the facts I found on both sides of the GMO battle. Hopefully, it will help you decide if eating GMO foods is for you!

Just as a reminder, according to Wikipedia, a genetically modified organism (GMO) is any organism whose genetic material has been altered using genetic engineering techniques (i.e., a genetically engineered organism). The science of GMO is used to produce many new medications, genetically modified foods, animal and other goods. While nature has its own natural selection system, humans have domesticated plants and animals since 12,000 BCE, using selective breeding or artificial selection. No doubt, genetics and DNA researches will continue to advance technologies, food supplies and lives in the future.

While many developed nations do not consider GMOs to be safe, the US and Canada governments do. The majority of GMO crops produced in the US are corn, soy, rapeseed, canola, cotton and sugar beet. Up to 90% of those crops grown are genetically modified. Most packaged foods in the US contain ingredients derived from GMO. While 84% of people support mandatory label for food containing GMO, one may wonder if labelling such foods is still really needed, considering such facts. Let us look now at a few comments on both sides of the debate.

## **FOR GMO**

Many people from the scientific, medical and farming communities feel that GMO is safe to our environment, health, life and food chain.

According to the latest studies conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine; no safety reasons justify labeling GMO in food. Extensive research on the safety of GMO crops over the past 10 years, have shown no clear impacts on human health. The American Medical Association stated GMO foods are fine, based on almost 20 years of research, as no clear impacts on human health have been reported or confirmed in professional journals. Furthermore, no links were found between eating GMO crops and the rates of allergies, cancer, sterility, kidney disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, gastrointestinal diseases, celiac disease and many other immune system disorders. Following a 2015 Pew Poll, 88% of scientists believe that eating GMO food is safe. The World Health Organization agrees too. There is also reasonable evidence that animals were not harmed by eating food derived from GMO crops. Epidemiological data show no increase in cancer nor any other health problems. GMO do not appear to be harmful to the environment either.

Here are some GMO benefits mentioned by its supporters:

GMO helps create more nutritive foods which would provide healthier benefits. Some examples: "Golden Rice" a type of rice genetically engineered to increase its beta-carotene content which could help prevent vision loss or blindness in developing nations. Meat boosted omega-3 fatty acids which could help prevent heart disease, stroke, may protect against cancer and other conditions.

GMO brought new pest-resistant crops such as Monsanto's "Bt corn" which is equipped with a gene from the soil bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), which produces Bt toxin-a pesticide that breaks open the stomach of certain insects and kills them. As a result, farmers use less pesticides which is beneficial to humans.

New herbicides are being created for GMO crops. By example, Glyphosate is believed to be safer than coffee or table salt.

GMO will help double food production which will be needed by 2050, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

GMO will prevent higher food prices in the future, considering the production of higher yield crops.

GMO decreases carbon dioxide, as less forests and pastures are used by farmers.

GMO crops will better protect human health and better feed the world in the future.

Before we explore the opposite side, I must mention that it appears that many studies that promote GMO safety were conducted by the same corporations who created GMO products in

the first place. GMO are also a direct extension of chemical agriculture which are developed and sold by the world's biggest chemical companies. The fact that the same corporations have a financial influence over our political and scientific systems cannot be overlooked either.

### **AGAINST GMO**

A growing number of people from the scientific, medical and farming communities feel that GMO is a serious threat to our environment, health, life and food chain.

Per the Non-GMO Project, a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed animal feeding studies of GMOs, found roughly an equal number of research groups raising concerns about GM foods and those suggesting GMOs were as safe and nutritious as conventional foods.

The American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) urged doctors to prescribe Non-GMO diets for all patients. They cite animal studies showing organ damage, gastrointestinal and immune system disorders, accelerated aging and infertility. The American Public Health and American Nurses Association are among many medical groups that condemn the use of GM bovine growth hormone, because the milk from the treated cows has more of the hormone IGF-1 (insulin-like growth factor 1) which is linked to cancer.

Furthermore, studies have shown a growing evidence of health risks associated with herbicides, pesticides and possibly GMO crops. Among the health problems reported by The Institute of Responsible Technology, Non-GMO Project, GMO.org and other organizations were infertility, birth defect, immune disorders, allergies, major organs changes, cancer such as Leukemia, Autism, Alzheimer and gastrointestinal issues.

A study published in the US National Library of Medicine and in the journal Food and Chemical Toxicology shows how several recent studies illustrate glyphosate's potential to be an endocrine disruptor. Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that can interfere with the hormone system in mammals. These disruptors can cause developmental disorders, birth defects and cancer tumors. Evidence shows that Roundup was recently found to be 125 times more toxic than regulators claims.

Researchers also found that GM crops may pass on certain properties to plants under the same family through cross pollination. Pesticides specifically designed for GMO crops can be particularly toxic to some species, and by introducing exotic genes and organisms into the environment may ultimately affect negatively the ecosystems.

Farmers and their workers have seen an increase in various health issues from allergies to cancer. That said, it is not that clear that those health issues are caused either by GMO, herbicides or pesticides. There is also evidence of environmental degradation to soil and water.

### **MY FINAL COMMENTS**

Now that you are aware of both sides of the debate, I will give you my thoughts. My understanding is that consensus on GMO safety is far from being there which troubles me. I am all for scientific research and development, after all we are all living longer thanks to the



progress of sciences and medicine. I am for scientific findings that have been reproduced many times and by impartial scientists, so trustworthy findings can be established. I am also not ready to give full freedom to our scientists, politicians and corporations over the control of our food chain, as their motives have not always been in our best interest.

Like many, I am not sure I can trust findings and reports from either side and that is a real problem. Not clearly knowing the reasonable effects on our health and the environment, nor the potential consequences GMOs could have on future generations is problematic. Since I always find the middle road to be wise, I must continue to recommend eating organic. Caution dictates the maintenance of a safe and sustainable alternative to GMO. Choosing organic is one control we still have over our food chain and environment. Shopping from local organic farm and cooking from scratch remain the best way to control what is in our plate, our local economy and our health.

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## San Diego Wine Review Council

By Marie-Annick Courtier - March 26, 2017

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon, I had the privilege to attend a Wine Council in San Diego. In the surprisingly large and tranquil garden of Marc and Robin' home, large umbrellas and comfortable table settings awaited dozens of us. Before sitting down; cameras snapped shots of the garden, stately Buddha and colorful foods all of us brought for our wines review. Before starting our tasting, none of us resisted the temptation to surround a charming and amusing lounging frog with a few bottled of wines.



Each participant was required to research a wine, pair with an appetizer, and share the information with others during our tasting. All our wines were from Israel, mostly from the Galilee region and Jerusalem. Though they were kosher, our foods were not.



We started with Todd sharing some of typical Passover traditions. Then, he quickly explained the significance of the foods used during a Seder ceremony, pointing out a plate he specifically prepared for us. While some families choose to eat all the presented foods, some divide them into smaller plates to share with guests. Though all the food maybe eaten, sometimes some foods are not, lamb shank bone and roasted egg come to mind. Generally, on a Seder plate appears:



1. A shank bone, chicken neck or roasted beet (vegetarian) which commemorates the paschal (lamb) sacrifice made the night the ancient Hebrews fled Egypt.

2. A roasted egg which symbolizes springtime, renewal, and to some, the resilience of Jewish people.
3. Maror or Bitter Herb which recalls the bitterness of slavery in Egypt and inspiration to reflect on your personal enslavements.
4. Charoset (apples, nuts, wine and cinnamon) which represents the mortar used by the Hebrew slaves to make bricks.
5. Karpas (green spring vegetable such as parsley) which symbolizes either freshness of spring, nobility or aristocracy.
6. Charezet (a second bitter herb or leafy greens of horseradish or carrot plant) which has same symbol as Maror.
7. Salted Water which symbolizes the tears of enslavement and, paradoxically, purity, springtime and sea, the mother of all life. A single bowl of salted water will sit on the table and used for dipping karpas or other seder meal by each participant.
8. Three Matzah bread pieces covered with a cloth, one of the most important symbol on a seder table, which represent Kohen class (priest of ancient time), Levis (who support the priests) and Israelites (the rest of Jewish people). Sometimes, a fourth piece is added to remember all people who are not yet free to celebrate as they wish.
9. Small Wine Cups and Wines (participants will usually drink four small cups of wine during the ceremony) which represent the four biblical promises of redemption: I will bring you out from the suffering of Egypt, I will save you from enslavement, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and I will take you to me as a Nation.

Finally, we were told that for a wine to be certified Kosher, it must be produced according to Judaism's religious law and gone through a recognized certification agency. The wine making process must be supervised and handled by Sabbath-observant Jews. Wine that is described as "Kosher for Passover" must be free from contact with grain, bread and dough. Now that we got our education out of the way, we were anxious to get to our six bottles of wines.



We started with a 2014 Flam Unoaked Blanc – Region: Judean Hills – 12.5% Alcohol - Average Price \$ 31. Fermented in stainless steel vats for 4 weeks, this wine is a blend of 55% Sauvignon Blanc and 45% Chardonnay grapes. It appeared clear, limpid with a pale lemony color. The nose offered an interesting balance of citrus aromatic notes such as grapefruit. The mouthfeel was light, crispy with a refreshing acidity that confirmed grapefruit. With a slight zesty and grassy taste, the lingering finish offered a surprising smoother finish than I expected. It was well-paired with a creamy spinach, leek and potato frittata. Other possible pairings mentioned: ceviche, a vegetarian or fish dish and goat cheese.

2014 Matar by Pelter Sauvignon Blanc Semillon – Region: Galilee – 12.2% Alcohol – Average Price \$33. This wine is a blend of 80% Sauvignon Blanc and 20% Semillon grapes. It appeared clear, light green with a slight hay color. The nose offered cantaloupe, grapefruit, honeysuckle and lemon peel aromas. The mouthfeel was light, crisp, slightly floral and grassy with definitely grapefruit and melon flavors. With too much acidity to my taste; the wine benefited from a surprising sweet touch of pomegranate and peach notes at the end. It was paired with the creamy spinach, leek and potato frittata. Other possible pairings mentioned: lemon or pomegranate sorbet or chicken curry.





2014 Teperberg Essence Chardonnay – Region: Ayalon Valley – 13.9% Alcohol – Average Price \$19. Aged in French oak barrels, this deep complex wine appeared slightly cloudy at glance with a golden hue. The nose offered citrus, pineapple and tropical fruit aromas. The mouthfeel was rather soft with buttery, pineapple and nutty flavors. A hint of bitterness lingered on the almost great smooth finish. It was paired with a gluten-free apple, grape, smoked salmon, Havarti dill cheese and fennel flatbread. Other possible pairing mentioned: Seafood dish, creamy tropical dessert, pineapple up-side-down cake.



2010 Carmel Winery Merlot Sha'al Vineyard – Region: Galilee – 14.5% Alcohol – Average Price \$33. Carmel Winery is one of the largest winery in Israel producing 15 million bottles a year. It was founded in 1882 by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, owner of Chateau Laffite (Bordeaux, France) and this wine is a great representation of Bordeaux style wines. After stainless steel fermentation, the wine was aged in French Oak barrels for 10 months. It had a deep rich ruby color with juicy plum and ripe red berries aromas. The mouthfeel offered good minerality (from rich volcanic soil of the region), a velvety tannic structure and smooth lingering finish. A well-rounded wine with aging potential of 7 to 10 years. It was paired with a ratatouille and beef roll

bruschetta. A small amount of diced plums added in the ratatouille emphasized the plum wine aroma. Other possible pairing mentioned: Lamb, roasted duck, game, hard cheese (Cantal, Emmental, Manchego) and bittersweet chocolate.



2012 Netofa Tinto Basse – Region: Galilee – 12.5% Alcohol – Average Price \$18. A blend of 60% Tiouriga Nacional and 40% Tempranillo, this wine was aged in French oak barrels for 10 month. It had a dark ruby color and a light purplish hue. The nose offered blackberry, tart cherry, pipe tobacco and oriental spices aromas. The mouthfeel confirmed the nose with the addition of a slight licorice and coffee flavors. This medium to full-bodied wine was well-balanced and its lingering fruity tannic finish pleasing to most of us. It was paired with a Tofurkey Paella, smoked paprika, carrots and rice. Other possible pairing mentioned: spicy poultry or meat dish, Mediterranean Cuisine, mature hard cheese and fruit tart or cobbler.

And now our final wine, 2012 Tabor Adama Shiraz – Region: Galilee – Alcohol – Average Price \$18. A surprising blend of 90% Shiraz and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine was aged in French oak barrels for 12 months and 6 months in the bottle to add more complexity. It had a deep purple color, quite characteristic of Shiraz. The nose offered raspberry, mulberry and violet aromas with hints of cedar and oak. The mouthfeel confirmed our initial nose plus a slight hint of cedar and oak. Definitely a well-balanced, tannic and full-bodied wine which lingered nicely. It was paired with a tapenade on toasted baguette. Other possible pairing mentioned: Meat dish, game, dark fruit pies, mince pie and Christmas pudding.



Thanks to our wonderful hosts, Linda (our organizer), guests and Royal Wine Corporation (our gracious supplier of those delicious wines out of New Jersey); we all had a delightful experience. We all agreed that the "2014 Flam Unoaked Blanc" was our favorite white, and that the "2010 Carmel Winery Merlot Sha'al Vineyard" was our favorite red. Though those wines may be a challenge to find in your local stores, they can be easily purchased online.

Sources:

Todd M. on Seder Ceremony, Google and Wikipedia

Kosher Wines provided by **Royal Wine Corporation** - <https://twitter.com/RoyalWineCorp>

Chef Marie is a proud member of The International Food, Wine & Travel Writers Association - <http://ifwtwa.org>

Chef Marie's personal food and pairing wine guide "[Food and Wine Pairing Demystified](#)" is available on Amazon.



## Exercise For Your Health



We all know exercising is very important for our health. But for some, physical activity through sports is not always possible. I now talk of experience, as after two unfortunate accidents, severe damages to my right leg and surgeries; doctors advised me to stay away from most sports.

As I still craved exercising in a healthy way, I had to figure out what I could do on regular basis without causing more damage to my leg. Tired of pain, I also had to listen to my body, and eliminate a few things I enjoyed that were no longer wise. Eventually, walking turned out to be the safest and healthier choice, but other alternatives suddenly became obvious to me. Here are a few examples:

- Stand away from my desk every 30min, stretch, and do some kind of movements for 5 minutes.
- Park my car far away from the office, mall or market entrance
- Go to the restroom that is the furthest away from me (only good when not in a hurry)
- Walk to school, park, theater, local store and bank whenever possible
- Play frisbee, hide and seek or tag
- Play croquet
- Play "la boule" or bocce
- Walk in pool
- Wash and wax my car instead of using a service
- Paint a room
- Clean house and garage
- Go on a nature hike, possibly having a picnic along the way
- Hike with friends
- Walk with a camera, have a specific goal for pictures or not

- Walk fast with a kite
- Walk on the beach in the sand
- Walk in the mall in the summer, when too hot outside
- Walk & check produce around a farmers' market for half an hour, before buying.
- Take the steps instead of escalators or elevators
- While watching television; use stationary bike, do stationary walk in one spot and stretches
- Weight training
- Yoga
- Walk meditation
- Tai chi
- Gardening, mow the lawn, rake leaves
- Get involved with a local garden club or community garden
- Volunteer at school, at a local community center or a nonprofit organization
- Volunteer to walk the dogs of neighbor or at local animal shelter
- Go on a scavenger hunt
- Go sightseeing
- Go to an amusement park, fair, zoo or museum
- When waiting for a flight, walk around the airport location
- Organize or volunteer for a cleanup activity in local community

Some of the ones I reluctantly gave up:

- Climb rocks
- Jump rope
- Step exercise in front of television
- Dancing
- Zumba class
- Roller blade

As you can see, there is always a way to exercise. I am sure you could add to this list. As a matter of fact, I would love to hear about your ideas. Let us all keep moving, shall we!

## **Respect**

My tolerance to disrespect is reaching its limit. I no longer can stand the way people addresses each other over social medias, medias, in the political and “civil” world in this country. I am ready to give up everything and move to a deserted island! Like me, many disapprove of the hatred and bigotry we witnessed these last few months. Many don’t know what to do about it. Honestly, I had no answer for sometimes. Then, after much reflections, some thoughts arisen. I will attempt to share them with you now.

When I coach people, I always remind them we do not have much control in life. The control that we have is limited to the choices we make and the actions we take.

### **1. I believe the most important choice we can make is to find the truth.**

Is truth the same for all? I believe so and until we figure it out, we have obligations.

One is to become aware how differently we view things. We all have filters based on past experiences, learned behaviors, perceptions, influences and illusory phenomena. We also don’t know everything which can bring fear and confusion.

Two, everyone has something of value to offer and to teach us. The more we listen and work together, the closer we come to consensus and the truth. Being open-minded and working with non-judgmental and respectful approaches also help to bring out the truth.

It is urgent that we listen with compassion. It is essential that we encourage and promote kind speech. It is imperative that we express concern and disagreement with gentle inquiries and every possible peaceful way we can imagine. If disagreement arises, we must seek more information and continue to build communications that emphasize respect, dignity and trust.

### **2. I believe the most important action we can take is one that respects ourselves and others.**

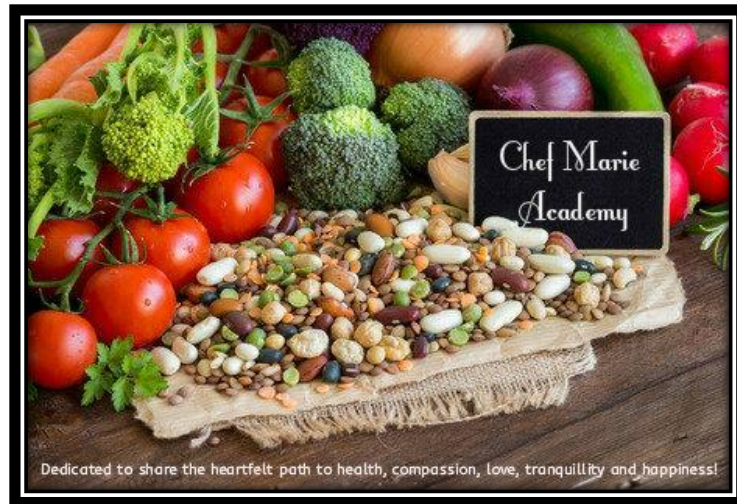
Interesting enough, when we do that, it often best serves humanity. But when we hurt or, worst, kill others with our actions; they only lead to more pain, anger and loss of our liberties. Change is inevitable, when we take an action. That said, the result is based on our intention which needs to be clear and based on universal goodness. Living our lives with humility, integrity and compassion lessen self-centered and disrespectful actions. And yes, unfortunately, history has shown us many despicable acts which, realistically, won’t completely disappear in the future.

Seriously, let’s all pause and reflect for a while. We have all witnessed how being disrespectful and trying to impose our beliefs on others result in embarrassment, anger and disasters. Enough of the ugliness of political, media and personal vendettas. It accomplishes nothing other than dividing us even more. There is a better way for sure. It would be hypocrite of me to ask you to embrace my beliefs I just expressed. So, I am not going to do that. My thoughts are just a vehicle which I hope awakens your curiosity and sense of humanity. All I wish is that we stop disrespecting each other. All I wish is that we desire to respectfully get comfortable with

the uncomfortable, as it is what allows breakthroughs. All I wish is that we think how one simple action can contribute to society and peace. All of this for the sake of freedom of expression, respect of our differences, appreciation of history and arts, and ways to diminish suffering for all beings. And let us all remember that

“Mutual respect builds the bridges to a neighborly land” Coach Marie-Annick Courtier.

## Embracing Moderation



This scientific article confirms what I, Marie-Annick, have kept pushing for years in regards to a healthy diet.

Basically, a moderate consumption of healthy fats, lean protein and good carb. Let's not forget the 3 to 4 servings of fruits, vegetables and legumes a day too!

To see the article, go to

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/08/170829091027.htm>

## Water and Hydration



There is no better place than Alaska to remind you of the dynamics of water. Water is weak, strong, soft, rough, cold and warm. Its powerful life source is everywhere. From the clouds, rains, Tundra, glaciers activities, whales breathing, moose drinking, bears fishing, sheep grazing, beavers' dams, foraging eagles, to the dolphins' playful attitudes and sea otters sunbathing on icebergs; water orchestrates and dances with all the life it supports.

Water peaceful nature ultimately reached my soul; as I witnessed salmon fighting streams, before reaching their birth grounds. Love and calm awaited them at the end of a long and strenuous journey. Thanks to Alaska, I now better understand life, survival instinct, resilience, community power and the endless process of change. I recognize the shared similarities life and water have. They both face inescapable challenges and can't ultimately withstand one journey. One mere action can either ease, complicate or end them. The rebirth cycle is endless. Enough philosophical thoughts for now, let us explore the important role water plays in our health.

Though our body can survive without food for about three weeks, it can't go without water too long. Depending on general health and environmental conditions, a week or less is the maximum. Our body is composed of 60% of water which cells need to function. Most water loss occurs through urination, bowel movement and sweating. Replenishing is therefore imperative and best done on daily basis. Hydrating can be accomplished by drinking and eating high-content water foods such as tomato, cucumber, lettuce, radish, strawberry or watermelon.

Teas, coffees, and some homemade vegetables/fruits juices are good sources as well. That said, keep in mind that they are diuretics. The best way to hydrate your body is to drink WATER.

Water helps to

- Regulate our body temperature
- Transport nutrients throughout our body
- Facilitate digestion
- Eliminate wastes and toxins from our body
- Control energy level
- Assist in weight management
- Suppress appetite
- Lubricate joints
- Promote brain function
- Fight against kidney stones

and, possibly, even reduce the risk of breast, colon and bladder cancer.

Even as low as 1 to 2% of water loss of your body weight can bring serious side effects. Here are a few signs of dehydration

- Feeling thirsty
- Feeling dizzy
- Physical and mental fatigue
- Irritability
- Decreased urination
- Yellow urine
- Light to severe headaches
- Muscle weakness
- Muscle cramps
- Dry skin
- Rapid heart rate

There is also no one-quantity-fits-all water formula. The amount of water must be based on your lifestyle, medications/supplementations you take, environment, and personal body needs. Feel free to explore the subject with your doctor, nutritionist and sport coach.

That said, having a glass of water here and there has never hurt anyone. So, I raise my water glass to you and say, "To Your Health"!



## Jar Salad



Fruits or vegetables jar salads are certainly more tantalizing than those served in plastic containers. They can include all kinds of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and so on. Since we eat with our eyes first, such presentation can also be more appetizing, if well-put together.

I recently enjoyed a store-bought vegetables and quinoa jar. I transferred it to a plate the best way I could. The result was certainly not as neatly designed as a plated salad would be, I thought. That said, the ingredients were fresh, crunchy, colorful and still attractive. The downside that I experienced was the lack of seasonings.

So, if you prepare any, I suggest you consider adding some


- Fresh herbs
- Spices
- Nuts (walnuts, almonds, pistachios, hazelnuts or cashews)
- Wheat germ
- Flax
- Chia
- Goji berries

They will add lots of flavors, great antioxidants and vitamins as well.

And remember: always keep the salad dressing separate, as it promotes quick spoilage.


## Banana

**A BANANA**  
is a great snack and source of



- Vitamins A, B6, C
- Manganese, Potassium
- Iron, Magnesium, Folate,
- Niacin, Protein, Dietary fiber

and only 90 to 120 calories/banana.

 **CMA** [www.chefmarie.com](http://www.chefmarie.com)

I can still recall my competition days when my coach made sure I had the proper snacks-water to refuel and hydrate.

I often carried bananas, nuts, dark chocolate bars and water bottles in my sport bag.

Still some of my favorite recommendations for replenishing the body during and after exercises!

## A Delightful Italian Wine



As I was planning an Italian dinner this last Saturday, I had to find a wine that would match our theme. After some research, I decided to try one I never had before. So I bought two bottles of Seколи Amarone Della Valpolicella 2014.

At 14.5% alcohol, I expected a wine that might be a little bit strong to me. At first glance, it had a clean medium to dark ruby color. The nose definitively reminded me of cherry to plum aromas. The mouthfeel brought out more cherry aromas, some raisins notes and a hint of burned caramel with a touch of chocolate. The moderate lengthy finish brought some slightly dried cherries tones. With its medium complexity, acidity and tannin; this wine was actually well-balanced to my surprise. It was very refreshing and easy drinking as well. Will definitely buy again.

BevMo's priced this wine at \$39. I enjoyed their week special which allowed me to get a second bottle for only \$0.05. Needless to say, a great deal for those wonderful two bottles!

Suggested Pairings: Gnocchi, seafood such as Cioppino, veal and chicken dishes or pizza.  
(4/5).

## What Is In A Healthy Breakfast?



We all heard the importance of eating breakfast. But what is considered a healthy breakfast for most people? I have been asked this question quite a few times, so I thought I share the information I often relay to my clients. To keep it simple, consider the 4 food groups that include your basic needed nutrients for a balanced healthy breakfast:

**An Unsweetened Drink** such as coffee, tea, herbal tea, broth or freshly made smoothie. Chocolate Milk is ok on special occasion. Use unsweetened cocoa powder to make your chocolate milk. Nothing wrong with a glass of water (optional: freshly squeeze citrus juice in it) as well.

**A Lean Protein:** Beans, lentils, home cooked turkey or chicken breast, fish, eggs, plain regular/low-fat Greek yogurt, lean cheese, nut butters or nuts (ex. almonds, walnuts, pistachios, hazelnuts, cashews or peanut).

**Grains:** Oatmeal, muesli, quinoa, porridge, millet, brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, cracked wheat such as bulgur, whole grain barley, whole wheat pasta, whole-grain cereals, whole wheat bread/bagel, buckwheat pancakes (careful with toppings, as it can add lots of calories).

**Fruits/Vegetables:** A seasonal fruit, cup of mixed fruits or chopped vegetables. Fruits can easily be added to cereals, mixed with yogurt or set as a side dish. Vegetables can be added to eggs, beans/lentils, cooked and slice chicken or turkey meats, fish or nut butters.

Here are some **basic examples** which you can adjust based on your personal nutritional needs.

1. Tea – 2 sunny side-up eggs – 1 slice pumpernickel bread - lettuce leaves and a few tomato slices - 1/2 cup watermelon.

2. Plain Coffee – 1/2 cup muesli with milk or plain yogurt – 2 Tbsp. sliced almonds – 1/2 cup raspberries.

3. Vegetable Broth – Omelet Provencal – 1 slice oat-nut bread – 1/2 cup blueberries.
4. 1 smoothie made from unsweetened juice, 1/2 banana, 2 Tbsp. oat, 1/2 cup mixed berries, 1 Tbsp. flaxseeds, 1/2 cup greens, 2 Tbsp. nuts and 1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt.
5. Tea – 2 scrambled eggs or hard-boiled egg– 1 slice oat nut bread - 1/2 cup fresh mixed fruits.
6. Herbal Tea - Lentils and Vegetables Soup - 1 small apple.
7. Water with lemon – 1 cup cooked Porridge – 2 Tbsp. walnuts – 1 seasonal fruit portion.
8. Plain Coffee – 1 whole wheat bagel – 1 Tbsp. almond butter – 1 cup cherries.
9. Tea – 2 medium-sized buckwheat pancakes – 1 oz. Cottage Cheese – 1 Tbsp. maple syrup - 1/2 cup strawberries.
10. Plain Coffee – 1 regular sized bran muffin (not extra-large) - 1 plain yogurt – 2 apricots.
11. Tisane – 1/2 cup cooked quinoa mixed with 1/4 cup almond milk – 1/2 diced banana – 2 chopped dried apricots – 1 tsp. dried cranberries - 2 tsp. pistachios.
12. Tea – 2 oz. sliced chicken breast – 1 pumpernickel bread slice – 1 tsp. mustard – 1/4 cup spinach - 4 tomato slices – 2 small plums.
13. Coffee – 2 poached eggs served over 2 cups fresh spinach and 1 sliced tomato – 1 pear.
14. Tisane – 1 whole grain bagel - 2 oz. smoked salmon - 1 Tbsp. low-fat cream cheese – 1 mango.
15. Tea – 1/2 cup uncooked oatmeal or steel cut oats with cinnamon– 1 cup water or milk – 1 Tbsp. nuts – 1 tsp. dried cranberries -1/2 apple.

Want more ideas and recipes, visit my recipes section.